CHRIST AND THE DRAMAS OF DOUBT

RALPH TYLER FLEWELLING

¶ The underlying theme of this volume—the problem of evil—has a compelling and perennial interest. The mightiest intellects of the ages have wrestled with this theme and the great world dramas are attempts to solve the problem.

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Christ and the Dramas of Doubt
By Ralph Tyler Flewelling

Deposited by the Methodist Episcopal Church.

CHRIST
AND THE
DRAMAS OF DOUBT

STUDIES IN THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

BY
RALPH TYLER FLEWELLING

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TO J. C. F.

WHOSE UNWAVERING LOVE AND
APPRECIATION HAVE BEEN A
GUIDING LIGHT ACROSS THE YEARS

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INTRODUCTORY

CHAPTER I

THE CAUSES OF DOUBT

A CLERGYMAN is said recently to have announced that he would preach from the subject, "Why do the corners of the mouth turn down?" We do not know how the good brother dealt with his question, nor what was the outcome, but in his homely phrase was a world of meaning. The phrase might well have been the theme of this chapter. In one form or another, now facetious and now in the darker phrasing of tragedy, it has been the fateful question of life which men have been working at from the beginning even until now. And though many misconceptions have been cleared away, in its abstract aspect very little positive ground has been gained. The problem still faces us, the despair of poet and philosopher alike. The reason for this failure to put at rest these questions

will eventually be found to lie, not in the imperfection of the natural world, but in the unfinished, unperfected quality of the human spirit, which cannot be satisfied with a world which is less than perfect and as yet is far from the moral goal which is home. The eternal words of Augustine come with a new pertinence and conviction to the present age, and we know them true: "Our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee."

Basis of the Problem

How deep and how ancient is this problem may be seen by reflection upon the earliest history of religion. The great religious myths are all concerned with the struggle of gigantic forces for mastery: light against darkness, good against evil. The rising and setting of the sun, the morning and evening stars, the waxing and waning moon, the approach and recedence of the seasons become but the poetic symbol and imagery, the outward representation of that which was, in the last analysis, the deeper struggle of man's own unresting heart. It is

not to be wondered at that all in him which called out for the eternal, the good, the pure, the abiding, seemed linked with the higher powers and processes of nature in a world in which he was but an atom.

Doubt Comes with Culture

In this early stage man was not a doubter. Despair may have been a constant factor in his life; fear surely was, but to his naïve imagination there was no place for doubt. Doubt is not the product of those active days in the life of a race, a nation, or an individual, when struggle is being made for conquest of natural forces. Those nations that have had the hardest struggle for existence have ever been the most religious. Doubt comes with ease, with reflection, with fullness—physical and intellectual. It therefore never appears in decided form in early stages of civilization, when men are pioneering the world, but is, rather, the product of more cultured days. The great literature of doubt appears not in the beginning but in the decadence of culture.

Doubt Arises from the Existence of Moral and Physical Disorder

Perhaps the first great shock to the reflective mind arises from the existence of moral and physical disorder in a universe created and controlled by a good God. However much certain persons may arise to affirm that evil, pain, sorrow, and misfortune are but aberrations of the mind, such a solution can never satisfy the souls of any but the well fed, well dressed and comfortable. It is a useless thing for men whose lives are daily tragedies, and who are not satisfied with a perfectly selfish and, therefore, immoral solution. However one may go on in his isolated self-sufficiency, the fact remains that great floods devastate and destroy the earth and the people in it. The pathos of Jean Ingelow's "faire Elizabeth," with her children drowned by the high tide on the coast of Lincolnshire and cast by the ebb before her own door, is a tragedy that has been often repeated. The ebbing tide of disaster too often lays our dearest and most precious stark and

lifeless at our feet. Great fires destroy the innocent and the guilty. Earthquakes have no way of passing by the homes of the just, but move with a startling impartiality. Epidemics of disease carry off the brightest and the best. Ofttimes the vicious, the useless, and the evil live through long years, corrupting the stream of life, while the good and the brave do not live out half their days.

Nor do we seem to be much better off when we approach the moral realm. Here we see not only the innocent suffering with the guilty, but the innocent suffering for the guilty. The greatest sufferer is not the man who commits sin, but some innocent and blameless life that is tied to him by bonds of relationship and affection. Very often there is an obtuseness in the criminal by which he seems to be incapable of deep suffering. The more revolting his crime the less his capacity for sensitive feeling. The burden of a man's sin falls less upon himself than it does upon those nearest to him.

When the seven sons of Saul for Saul's

crime were hanged by the men of Gibeah, the greatest suffering was neither Saul's nor his sons'. The great sufferer was the tearless Rizpah, watching through days of heat and starless nights, from the beginning of harvest until the coming winter. The same truth is borne home in the verses of Kipling's "Mother o' Mine."[1]

If I were hanged on the highest hill,
Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!
I know whose love would follow me still,
Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!

If I were drowned in the deepest sea,
Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!
I know whose tears would come down to me,
Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!

If I were damned of body and soul,
I know whose prayers would make me whole,
Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!

He who declares there is no pain nor evil takes but a shallow and inadequate view of the deepest moving facts of life. Nor is this all. Many lives seem to go astray in the scheme of things. Sometimes the finest spirits are forced to pessimism by a sense of personal wrong and social isolation, as

[1] Kipling, Dedication to The Light that Failed.

in the case of Shelley and Heinrich Heine. The shallow and the superficial are often exalted to the place of prominence and power, and set to rule over men of far greater capability, whose capacities go undeveloped and undiscovered, and who sink out of life with no opportunity to speak their message to the world—"of whom the world is not worthy," and of whose possibilities the world stands in sore need.

No age has ever been so conscious of the immeasurable wastes of society as the present. Little children toil away strength, childhood, imagination, the possibility for the spiritual, the opportunity for mental development, in sweatshop, home, and factory. A greedy and materialistic age robs them of the most priceless gifts of life before they have attained the age of understanding, and turns them into middle life with diseased bodies and minds, uncultivated spiritual lives, in some cases but little better than the beasts of the field, in some cases worse. The existence of moral and physical disorder becomes thus one of the most pressing problems of the age.

Doubt Arises from the Missed Aim of Happiness

The darkness cast by the cloud of moral and physical disorder might perhaps be forgotten if only a considerable portion of the race seeking happiness could find the way thither. But this way seems forever closed. Happiness does not dwell in the halls of the great. No class finds life so futile and unsatisfying as that which sits continually in the lap of ease. The struggle for amusement among the rich becomes more tragic than in the so-called less fortunate is the struggle for bread. That pessimism cannot be exceeded which, as President Jordan[1] says, is "a reaction from unearned pleasures and spurious joys."

All gratification that becomes an end in itself seems to yield the same result. Unbridled indulgence makes further enjoyment impossible. Pleasure, to remain pleasurable, must be earned. Even in the religious realm this is true. Stirred emotions and states of rapture which are never

[1] David Starr Jordan, The Philosophy of Despair, p. 27.

connected with genuine gains in character and in service of one's fellows, end in a disillusionment and spiritual poverty in which one may hear the cry, "All is vanity."

This despair arises out of a false conception of happiness, a false estimate of its relation to the remainder of life, and the fact that nothing which is not itself eternal can satisfy the human soul.

Doubt Arises from Mental and Moral Readjustment

The necessity for moral, mental, and political readjustment is also a cause for despair in many minds. There come times when the very face of the earth is so changed by upheaval that men have to make complete readjustment and build them new homes before life can go on.

The scientist in his laboratory makes a discovery which renders inconsistent a whole system of theology that has remained unquestioned for years. A political upheaval casts upon a monarchical theism the necessity to look upon God across a rising tide of individualism. The tribal god of

Israel's national life gives way with political dependence to a God whom Jesus teaches men to call Father. The vindictive and irresponsible gods of older Greece fall before a growing sense of individual moral responsibility. A political theory goes down in the crash of war, and for a time there is much confusion and noise. Many charges and counter-charges are made, and only with time do many readjust their thinking to the new order of things. Such an age came to Israel with the exile and the readjustment following that most significant event in her national history. Greece saw such a day when the little confederation first realized its strength in the turning back of the Persian tide under Xerxes which made possible the age of Pericles. England witnessed such a period of transition after the defeat of the Spanish Armada and the call to empire in a newly discovered world. Europe witnessed like scenes of tumult in the rise of a new individualism, the revolt of the human spirit generally present but spectacularly realized in the French Revolution.

When old systems of thought become inadequate the extremists declare that the old is without virtue and should be thrown over altogether. The other side, realizing the truth of the old, and not yet seeing the way clear to readjustment, appeals to tradition. Such an age is always one of doubt and darkness.

Doubt Arises from Lack of Adequate Life Motive

One very much underestimated cause of despair has yet to be named. More pessimism springs from lack of adequate motive in life than from all other causes. The causes already named are speculative, but this is practical. The world can move on so long as doubt concerns itself exclusively with the speculative issues, but when it enters into practical life it becomes vicious and harmful. Speculative doubt is the indulgence of a few reflective minds, or of men with morbid physical and mental conditions. Practical doubt is the possession of vast multitudes. The man who, devoid of motive, hid his talent in the earth

was not only struck with despair at his own helplessness and weakness, but he was struck also with moral blindness. He overlooked his responsibility for what had been only trusted to his keeping, and was cast out both for his sloth and for his wickedness.

The reason men are struck with world-weariness is because they have wandered through the world of sense and experience with no motive beyond that of self-gratification. Their excursion into the world of learning has been without moral aim. It is such lives, with motive inadequate for an immortal being, that turn back disappointed on the toilsome way. Neither the will to feel nor the will to know is in itself enough. In a moral being they demand a moral purpose. Both experience and knowledge are the means to action. They awaken the strongest impulses to action, and if these impulses are resisted, there is moral and spiritual deadness and despair. Experience that is not wrought out in life, that does not lead to a better character, making one more honest, more sympathetic, more loving, more serviceable,

is like Israelitish manna whose worth did not last beyond a single day.

The men who despair for the well-being of the world are never the men who are throwing themselves into the saving of the world. They are men whose hearts have been convicted of responsibility. They are men who have sensed the need of self-giving, but have not been willing to enter upon the saving of the world in the only way it can be saved—by personal contact and unselfish action.

When one hears the voice of despair one may be certain of this alternative: the presence of morbid pathological conditions in the man's body or the weakening of the man's moral fiber. The skepticism that is most dangerous to the church does not much concern itself with the theoretical aspect of belief. The unbelief that threatens the life of the church is the unbelief that sings songs, repeats creeds, testifies on Sunday, and during the week gives itself solely to the accumulation and enjoyment of the things of the world. Such a religion is no more exempt from the pit of despair than

is an intellectual world that learns and learns and never comes to a knowledge of the truth, because behind it is no adequate motive.

Man must discover the personal imperative of duty between his life and the world of relations around him. He cannot take it out in intellectual dream or religious vision. To be able to abide, it must touch the ground. There must be a sense of personal relationship to God which calls him to practical duty. The personal imperative of duty must be a divine command on his life. Knowledge or so-called religious experiences not wrought into life and action deaden and disarm both mind and soul, and the end is despair. "The experience of all the ages brings only despair if it cannot be wrought into life."[1]

Doubt Arises from the Failure of Spiritual Ideals

This brings us close to the problem raised by the failure of spiritual ideals. Sometimes men in the very pursuit of religion

[1] David Starr Jordan, The Philosophy of Despair, p. 14.

seem to overshoot the mark and end in absolute denial. This is sure to be true of any man who follows a religious ideal that is not open to revision by the growing experience of life. Spiritual ideals must have the power of expansion and change under the light of reason and experience. We undertake a dangerous course when we decide upon a religious action which demands that we hoodwink the mind or do injustice to our finer sense. Religion, instead of being out of harmony with the finer sentiments of life, is in strict keeping with them. No truly religious ideal can remain ever the same for any living soul. Day by day it must become something better and more perfect. Dissatisfaction and spiritual unrest should be taken not as the tokens of failure but as the evidences of a life struggling for expression. The true man, having done his best, must feel that he has failed. The mountain heights of Jesus's character remain to rebuke the low levels of his own attainment.

CHAPTER II

THE EPOCHS OF DOUBT

The Drama as an Expression of the Problem in Its Most Living Form in All Lands and Ages

So soon as one begins to study the great literary monuments that deal with the problem of evil he will be struck by the similarity of conditions under which they have been produced. Upon the sands of time successive waves have left their highest mark, but there are many evidences of the same primal impulse from the same unresting sea. Man's literary effort has reached its high tide in the drama or tragedy, and tragedy's one question concerns itself with the solution of the problem of evil. We need but to name them over to realize this fact. The book of Job, Æschylus's masterpiece, the Prometheus, Hamlet, and Faust would by common consent be

granted the highest rank in the literary world. The most significant drama of recent years might perhaps with less unanimity be accorded as being Ibsen's Brand. The eras that brought them forth present most striking similarities. Each of these dramas brought the ever-recurring problem to the surface at a time when a new individualism was forcing itself upon civilization by reason of great religious, intellectual, or political changes.

Because of this living element the drama is the truest expression of real problems. It presents problems as they exist in the common thought of a nation or people. Such problems are not dramatized, or, at least, do not make successful appeal to their time unless they have been keenly felt in contemporary living. Their message is thus more direct and clear than that of other contemporary literature.

Awakened by new scientific and intellectual attainment, startled by the discovery of new worlds, or the renaissance of old civilizations, men follow the stars of great hopes. But the moment of fulfill-

ment is sure to be a moment of disillusionment. The national triumph looked forward to, instead of settling national problems, only opens the way out of the old contentments into a far more perilous road of larger tasks and struggles. Man casts his spear into the ground at every hill-crest of attainment and, before looking around, says, "Here we rest"—but the next moment discloses to his startled perception higher peaks and vaster pilgrimages. He cannot rest, and his task seems too great for him.

In the religious realm the tragedy becomes far more acute, for here men are ever demanding certainty. The possibility of theological change threatens to the common mind the direst calamity. We are strictly told that we walk by faith and not by sight, but who can be content with so dangerous a program? We immediately endeavor to bolster faith with philosophical theory that shall make faith more or less unnecessary. That theory we falsely dignify with the name of faith. Growth in intellectual perception, the rising tide of human experience,

has swept out the foundation of the underlying philosophy, and man in despair has set forth again upon this shoreless sea, while

> . . . evermore
> Most weary seem'd the sea, weary the oar,
> Weary the wandering fields of barren foam.

The accomplishment of political reformation, the firm seating of new intellectual systems, the triumph of a cause, the disillusionment which comes with the unsatisfying Utopia, brings a moment of great popular despair. Outside is hindrance which, unforeseen, keeps man back from entering his promised land, with the ruthlessness of an arbitrary fate. At such a time the thoughts of men turn inward. There comes within the consciousness of higher spiritual qualities which can conquer, yea, rise to the highest when the dearest material dream[1] lies in hopeless ruin.

The Age of Æschylus

Such an age produced Æschylus. The Grecian confederacy had by a supreme

[1] Courtney, The Idea of Tragedy.

effort turned back the barbarian hordes of Persia. The threatened supremacy of Persian culture was at an end. Æschylus himself had been a soldier in that war for Grecian independence and civilization. Greece reveled in her triumph. At first blush there was promise of a new birth of freedom. She felt the call of a great national destiny. Her triumph was the triumph of Greek institutions. There was to be a new girding of the loins for tasks. The inspiration was thrilling the hearts of all classes of society. There was a breaking away from old thralldoms and superstitions. The lower classes were demanding a place and a voice in government. Along with this came a new birth of the Grecian religious consciousness. The triumph of Grecian institutions meant also the triumph of the Grecian gods. Yet the old religious conceptions were like old winesacks that were incapable of containing the new wine of religious feeling. With a new touch upon Egyptian civilization there had come a new sense of the sinfulness of sin. Egyptian Orphism had rendered the older Grecian

conceptions inadequate by introducing a new sense of sin and blood-guiltiness.[1]

Men were awed by the seriousness of the readjustments that faced them. There were the ancient doctrines of divine malignity and moral perverseness which had been made impossible by the rising consciousness of the supremacy of moral values. A Zeus who could sit supreme and in laughing contempt

> Looking over wasted lands,
> Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring deeps and fiery sands,
> Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and sinking ships, and praying hands—

to whom all was as a tale of little meaning—fell far short of satisfying the necessities of the human spirit. To meet the problem raised by such a crisis Æschylus wrote his great tragedies. With all his faith he was not without trepidation at the threatening elements in the new day that had come to Greece. He feared the growing power of the masses. He feared the collapse of old

[1] Campbell, Tragic Drama, p. 147.

institutions; most of all he feared that in the shifting tides of change might be lost the consciousness of God. His mind was alert to what seemed to him the impieties of the time. Is not all this reflected in the sufferings of an impious Prometheus, at the same moment in which are prophesied the final reconciliation and deliverance, and the justification of the ways of God which we must believe formed the climax of the third and last member of the Promethean drama?

The Age of Job

In the case of the drama of Job it is not so easy to dogmatize, for there is among scholars the widest range of opinion as to the age that produced it. The foremost objection to a late age for the book is the almost total lack of any reflection in it of Jewish institutions as we know them after the exile. It was this fact that led Renan to declare its author not a Jew but an Idumean. There seems to be much plausibility in this theory until we reflect upon the possibility of literary culture and philosophic grasp among the wandering Arab

tribes of Edom, the singular solitariness of this great book, and the needed explanation of its arrival in the Jewish canon.

If, on the other hand, the priestly literature did not arise until some time after the return from exile, it would be possible for the book to have been written after the exile, and in that period following the return when the high hopes raised by the restoration had been blasted by partial failure. It is best to leave this part of the problem to the biblical experts with more adequate resources and to go meekly where the greatest own themselves puzzled by conflicting considerations. Suffice it to say that from the exile on to the very coming of Jesus there were recurring political situations in Judah that closely fit the common condition for the drama of doubt. The completion of the temple, the rise of a king, the fall of an ancient enemy, each was sufficient to awaken the consciousness of defeated and misunderstood destiny.

After the exile the Hebrew race was ever conscious of such a religious destiny. The return from the exile and the reconstruction

of the temple were the tokens of God's favor and the evidences of the national mission. During this period that portion of Asia was convulsed by sweeping tides of political change. Kingdoms waxed and waned; dynasties that had promised to be eternal passed in a night. It was a period of great migrations that decided the destinies of the Western world.

Profoundly conscious of the superiority of his religious system, the Jew lived possessed by a great hope that Israel was soon to take her true place in the leadership of the nations. The more the years grew away from the exile the more intense became her problem. She had held to a doctrine of a God who overruled the stream of history,[1] and who rewarded righteousness with material prosperity and evil with calamity and adversity.

Hitherto Israel's religious problem had been national, the problem of a group. Ezekiel had filled the darkness of exile with lightning flashes proclaiming inevitable personal responsibility. He declared their sins

[1] Wenley, Aspects of Pessimism, pp. 16, 17.

to be not the sins of a group but of individuals, who had brought destruction upon the nation, and who would suffer their individual punishment. But the temporal reward of righteousness and the punishment of the evildoers did not agree with the facts as seen in human life, and to this problem the author of Job addressed himself.

The Age of Shakespeare

The age that produced Hamlet was likewise remarkable. Europe was now reaping the fruits of the revival of learning. Protestantism had, over considerable sections of Europe, come into undisputed power. The destruction of the Spanish Armada had been for England the birth of a new national consciousness. It had brought the idea of national destiny. Spain's empire beyond the seas was already sending home its golden argosies. Spain had been conquered on the seas by the grace of God and the intrepidity of English sailors. Bacon, in the world of investigation, was laying the foundation for the new day of

scientific knowledge. The heavy hand of change had been laid upon mediævalism with its constant tendency to substitute theory for fact. Among the masses the superstition concerning magic, satanic influences, the black arts, lingered still. On the one side were the people clinging to the mechanical mediæval conception of the problem of evil; on the other hand were the scientific men tinctured with a spirit of skepticism in the ardor of the new learning. Hamlet represents the problem raised by this contest. Was Hamlet Shakespeare's English answer to the soliloquizing pessimism of Montaigne?[1] Shakespeare's demand was for action. He had a conviction of divine Nemesis as clear as Æschylus himself. He saw the truth that evil draws destruction in its own train. He saw also that a living faith was necessary to a true meeting of the problem of existence. The sinews of righteousness would be cut by doubt. It was better to stumble blindly toward the goal than by inaction to unnerve the true forces of character.

[1] Jacob Feis, Shakespeare and Montaigne.

The Age of Goethe

The world that witnessed the production of Goethe's Faust was also a world of ferment, political, intellectual, and religious. Over western Europe and America existed the spirit of individualism which was most spectacularly set before the world in the French Revolution. An ancient feudalistic aristocracy was dissolved with great heat, and its world passed away before the new world had found itself. In the philosophical world Kant had already come to show the inconsistencies and failures of the inductive philosophy. With the rising demand for individual freedom there was also a demand for greater freedom of thought and the emancipation of the spirit. Everywhere life was bowed down by conventions.[1] The age was singularly poor in the spiritual and moral values. Men had lost the consciousness of personal touch with God. In England the Wesleyan revival was only beginning. There was not present, as in Æschylus's Greece or Shake-

[1] Santayana, Three Philosophical Poets, p. 151.

speare's England, the national consciousness of political destiny, although this spirit was soon to waken and give us the German empire. But the new Renaissance gave men the feeling of standing on the border of the old and at the beginning of the new. It looked as if established customs, the authority of the church, the older type of learning, all were to be dissolved. It was these forces that created the skepticism which is treated in Faust. Had Goethe been less the representative of his age, he would have risen nearer the solution of the problem. But his solution was characteristic of the spiritual want of his time. The religious effect of Kant's philosophy had been to strengthen the appeal to reason and the moral judgment as the test of religious truth, to render miraculous communication of moral instruction useless, if not absurd.[1] Goethe's problem, then, was the problem of discovering and revealing what relations, if any, did exist between such a God and such a world as were being set forth. How could the individual find his place in such a

[1] Farrar, Free Thought, p. 324.

world and how bring about his own redemption?

The Age of Ibsen

Ibsen spoke to his age like one of the Hebrew prophets. He spoke to a people who had settled down to small satisfactions so engrossing that they had become blind to spiritual vision and deaf to divine calls. Great occasions could bring no response from people who had thus settled on the lees. The Scandinavians seemed to be making their last stand before the rising tide of national consciousness in Germany. Denmark found herself at the mercy of the German confederacy and her blood brothers upon the north seemed absolutely indifferent to her fate. They could not be gotten beyond the realm of fair words and good wishes. Because Ibsen wished to scourge the national indifference to the great values he wrote Brand. Brand was himself, speaking with prophetic voice to an indifferent age. And yet Brand failed because his sense of justice, the demand of his perfect ideal, was not tempered with love.

THE FIRST STEP

PROMETHEUS BOUND—THE STRUGGLE WITH AN IMPOSSIBLE THEOLOGY

CHAPTER III

THE REVOLT AGAINST AN INHUMAN GOD

Story and Problem

a. the story

The Greek drama known as Prometheus Bound was the outgrowth of the troubled spirit of a great nation. The little land had cast back the tides of invasion, her white-sailed ships were in every port, her high-walled cities were filled with the treasures of art, her people were blessed with a growing enlightenment, her political star was rising to the zenith, but her heart was filled with unrest. There was an earnest desire to follow and to serve the gods that every loyal Greek felt had been the means of saving them from the Persian tyranny. But their very victory had thrust them upon darker and deeper questioning. The pick and flower of the nation had all too generally fallen upon the field. With

Lowell, Æschylus could mourn for those who

> . . . come not with the rest,
> Who went forth brave and bright as any here!
> I strive to mix some gladness with my strain,
> But the sad strings complain,
> And will not please the ear;
> I sweep them for a pæan, but they wane
> Again and yet again
> Into a dirge, and die away in pain.

It was a fact that the living had been saved to a great destiny, but the true, the noble, and the great had bought that destiny with their lives.

Pain, misery, misfortune, and death had ever been interpreted in the Greek religion as the result of the anger of the gods. Now they were faced by the paradox—the anger of the national gods had fallen upon the saviors of the nation. No one was fitted more clearly to see or more deeply to be moved by this problem than Æschylus. He had, through his bringing up at the seat of the Eleusinian mysteries, by his contact with the newly introduced Orphism of Egypt, been impressed with the fact that

sin brought its own sure and swift ruin. The sins of the fathers were visited with terrific vengeance upon the children. The blood of the murdered cried from the ground. Upon him was now thrust the further problem of justifying a god who would not only see to it that terrible sin was terribly punished, but who did not spare the stroke from the brave and the good. Into what crisis of thought the people were cast may best be read in the literature and history of the time. Æschylus was the last to write in the full belief in the ancient Homeric and Hesiodic gods. Euripides, who followed him, was an innovator and a heretic. Upon Æschylus was cast the supreme task.

To serve his purpose he had at hand the popular tradition regarding Prometheus. The name means to Æschylus "Forethought," though it may for an earlier day have borne the simpler meaning "Fire-bringer." Prometheus was the fountain of man's intellectual gifts, the one who had enabled him to ameliorate his hard lot and to conquer the earth. From him

had come not only the knowledge and use of fire, but all the arts of civilization. He was man's defense from the unrelenting hates of Zeus. His intervention and defeat of the sterner will of Zeus called down the divine anger. Therefore, Titan though he is, and in other days the helper of Zeus to supreme rule, he is chained to a great rock, exposed to the elements and suffers daily to have his liver fed upon by the eagle. We have arrived at the very climax of the problem—the good, the beneficent, suffering for his beneficence. Had Æschylus a memory of a darker hour when Cynegiras, his elder brother, fell dying in his arms at Marathon? But the spirit of defiance which speaks through the lips of Prometheus is also the protest of Æschylus against every such heathen conception of God.

> Let him hurl me anon into Tartarus—on—
> To the blackest degree,
> With Necessity's vortices strangling me down!
> But he cannot join death to a fate meant for me.

The introduction of Io with her sufferings at the hands of the inhuman Zeus is only to complete the picture of the impossible

God. He faces his problem in the darkest degree. Prometheus seems to perish in the crash of worlds.

Earth is rocking in space
And the thunders crash up with roar upon roar—
And the eddying lightnings flash in my face
And the whirlwinds are whirling the dust round and round,
And the blasts of the winds universal, leap free
And blow each upon each, with a passion of sound.
And Æther goes mingling in storm with the sea!
Such a course on my head in a manifest dread,
From the hand of your Zeus has been hurtled along!
O my mother's fair glory! O Æther enringing,
All eyes with the sweet common light of thy bringing,
Dost thou see how I suffer this wrong?[1]

b. THE PROBLEM—A GOD WITHOUT MORAL RESPONSIBILITY IN AN INCREASINGLY MORAL WORLD

It will be seen that the real problem of the Prometheus is the justification of a god who is the author of pain, suffering, and sorrow, and the problem is not solved in that portion of the drama which remains to us. The Prometheus Bound is the

[1] Mrs. Browning's translation.

second number of a trilogy of dramas which brings the problem to intensest form and statement. We must believe that the question was met in Æschylus's own way in the third member of the trilogy, the Prometheus Unbound, of which we have but the merest fragment.

The old religious teachers of Greece had represented that Zeus was envious of the success, comforts, and happiness of men; that he loved to strike the fairest and the dearest. Æschylus strove to show that he was angry not against success but against sin.[1]

"In the half-century before his time, what is vaguely known as the Orphic movement, due partly to fresh contact with Egypt and the East, had gained much prevalence amongst enlightened Greeks. . . . The horror of blood-guiltiness, the sense of human sinfulness and divine wrath, and of the need of purification and atonement, were at the same time greatly deepened. Religious hopes and fears, though still largely turning on ceremonial con-

[1] Plumptre, Æschylus, ix.

ditions, became more individual and personal.[1]

"Not the destruction of an existing order, as in Shelley, not in the omnipotence of human intellect, as in Goethe's lyric, but the ultimate harmonizing of apparent opposites in the divine nature, with the corresponding peace on earth and good will among mankind is the ground idea of the trilogy as a whole."[2]

Thus far has Æschylus come in the statement of the problem. A god of retribution is an assured fact, witnessed by the common tragedies of life. Suffering is a necessity, cast upon those who would most help the race, and who insure the rule of the gods over men. This story life has told him in scenes of heartbreak and aspiration. But in a god of retribution who punishes without moral responsibility he cannot believe. If that is the highest conception, man might better "curse God and die," amidst the echoes of divine wrath. Yet in rebellion against God there is no peace. To fight and die for the good of

[1] Campbell, Tragic Drama, p. 144. [2] Ibid., p. 147.

the race implies a daily recurring and meaningless agony in which one's breast is torn anew with heartbreak.

> Hast thou not seen this brief and powerless life,
> Fleeting as dreams, with which man's purblind race
> Is fast in fetters bound?[1]

In these words he voices the depths of his despair in the face of his problem.

Mankind has made long marches away from the darkness of thoughts which filled the mind of Æschylus. We have learned new and different things about God through his revelation in the face of Christ. And yet so little changed is human nature that, in spite of the gospel, the mind is prone to return to the primitive conception. It is easy to interpret our misfortunes as the wrath of God, and to compare our little pleasures with the divine smile. We too often think of God as inimical to human happiness. With many still the greatest criterion of sin is enjoyment. That in which the natural man takes pleasure seems

[1] Lines 558-560, Plumptre's translation.

of itself sin. The catastrophes of nature—fire, earthquakes and cyclones—continue to be interpreted here and there as the wrath of God. The death of little children is now and then represented as a divine judgment. The wearing of amulets has not completely departed from this Christian age. There lingers a suspicion of the divine malevolence, a feeling that in pure joy we are most unsafe. Human happiness is too often represented to the young as framed in misery and suffering. This sort of superstition about God could never hold for a moment if we were to keep strictly to the true conception of the God in Christ. Because we have felt it necessary to confirm all the ancient Hebraic ideas of God, we have hidden the full-orbed features of the face of Christ.

Never does this question come so vividly before us as when we stand over the grave of a life that all too soon has been called from work through pain, inhumanity, or suffering. We wonder at the divine goodness. Or we see a life that has wasted its opportunities, and, so far as human under-

standing can go, there is only a fearful looking for of judgment.

Of this we need to be assured. We have looked upon God in the face of Jesus Christ. What Christ would have been to such a soul God will be to him. What Christ would be to us in our grief, were he present as when in Galilee, that will God be to us. There is no need to approach God with indirectness. Christ was the human image of the Father. Let us not think his love is less than ours. Let us not dream his sense of justice is less than ours. Our love and justice are but a tiny cup where his are a great sea. The judgment of this Grecian seer of the long ago was correct. An inhuman God cannot command the worship of men.

CHAPTER IV

GROPING AFTER THE WAY

The Law of Retribution an Assured Fact

Æschylus, in all his tragedies, has held true to the theory of retribution for sin. It is maintained by some that there was in him no thought of a remedial end of suffering, but only of a retributory purpose. At any rate, we may be sure that just here was a point that most puzzled the mind of the great dramatist. He saw the limitations of his theory of retribution. One crime demanding another for vengeance was a process that would never end until there were no more men left of a house, or a race, to be murdered. In the end vengeance would defeat its own aim, and fall upon the guiltless. The problem thus raised he strove to settle in his Eumenides, where even the hand of vengeance is stayed

from the final stroke after the sinner has been driven, suffering, across the world.

Yet Æschylus held in the main to the theory of the friends of Job. No sin could go unpunished, and from this he drew the doctrine that all suffering implied guilt. We must believe this was his thought regarding Prometheus. Prometheus had been the great benefactor of mankind. His power had been used to seat Zeus on the throne and to secure him reverence and worship among men. His mind was able to read as well the limits of Zeus' sway. He knew the weakness of the Supreme God as men then knew and read him. But with access of knowledge came access of impiety. His denunciation and rebellion against God was sure to be met by punishment. If we take Prometheus as the impersonation of human forethought and skill, with its constant contribution to the rising tide of civilization, we shall see what Æschylus meant. Human wisdom was prone to flaunt itself in the face of the gods, to rob them of their just dues, to question their right and power, and every such sin

of impiety, though it rise from men who have done most for the race and the cause of religion, must be met with its proper punishment and retribution. No man, though he be a Titan, could escape it. This was in strict accordance with the world as he saw it. The hand of death knocked at every door. Calamity is no respecter of persons. He had seen the loveliest and the best giving their lives a forfeit for others. Death fell not only upon the unjust, but also upon those who were careful in maintaining scrupulously the forms of religion. There must be with them, as thought the friends of Job, some secret sin, some vaunting of the heart, which could not escape the all-seeing wrath.

It is a curious thing how deeply this feeling is written into the human heart, how wide a spell it has cast over our religious conceptions, and how it lingers in the minds of men. This is because it is the easiest explanation, and the mind demands explanation. Suffering may come as the awful retribution and reward for sin. No man has lived long who has not

had opportunity to see for himself that "the wages of sin is death." Very many sins we know carry within themselves fearful consequences to the sinner in this life. With a just God how could it be otherwise? How easy it is when the misfortune happens not to us but to our neighbor to lay it to his sinfulness and error! If these are unseen, it is only a part of the frailty of human judgment to conclude there are hidden sins for which he is being punished. We ask with unblushing casuistry the old, old question of his disciples, "Did this man sin or his parents?" They thought they were presenting a dilemma to the Master, that he must answer one way or the other. How surprised they must have been to have him answer, "Neither did this man sin nor his parents!"

The Law of Sacrifice Making Demands on Life

I am quite aware of the importance of keeping in mind that we must not allow our Christian conceptions to guide our judgment on the implications of this

greatest of Greek tragedies. Yet it may not be amiss to note that either consciously or unconsciously in his thought of divine Nemesis, or retribution, Æschylus did hit upon the eternal law of sacrifice. We know he must have seen it, though as yet it was not very clear. He must have been a keen discerner of the depths of human experience. He had seen how the blessings and prosperity of the present had been won by the fearful sufferings of the past. As I have mentioned above, his brother had died beside him in the battle of Marathon, that glory of Grecian history. If tradition be true,[1] his other brother, Ameinias, was in charge of the galley that, single-handed, began the attack upon the Persian fleet at Salamis when others were retreating in fear. At any rate there must have come close home to his heart this problem of how the liberty and prosperity of the many were purchased by the ill-deserved suffering of the few. Prometheus pictures his own life problem as it is done by none other of his known works. He

[1] Ridgeway, Origin of Tragedy.

had abundant opportunity to know the deeper truth of what Annas meant so falsely: "It is expedient that one should die for the whole nation, and that the nation perish not." The Greeks who came to see Jesus should have recognized the congruity of his words with their supreme drama. "If I be lifted up," was his most direct way of telling them that he would most benefit the world by laying down his life. Who may say that the Master did not purposely voice thus his appeal to the deeper Grecian religious consciousness, a consciousness present not only in Æschylus but in the Grecian religious mysteries? Who can say that the men who heard that day failed to understand? We must be aware that the preparation for the gospel was not carried on in Palestine alone, nor was it alone in the singular providence of the universal Roman rule, nor was a universal language the only contribution of the Greek mind. The preparation for Christ was deeper and more universal than were even these. It is a matter not without significance that the great preacher of

salvation by the cross was born and reared under Grecian influences and with a Grecian education, and that for the most part he preached to the Grecian world. It was no accident that his clear-seeing mind perceived the vital interest of Christianity where the more Jewish apostles were slow in appreciation. Paul conquered the Greek world with the message of the cross.

The Necessity of Reconciliation

a. on the part of prometheus

However striking the similarities and coincidences may have seemed so far, these will be deepened by a further consideration of our problem. The one section of Prometheus which is in our possession closes with Prometheus engulfed in the debris of crashing worlds. We are brought by dramatic climax to the intensest appreciation of our problem, and there is no answer to the question thus shouted into the dark.

We are not left, however, absolutely without guidance. In the story of Io, Æschylus has made Prometheus prophesy that Io's descendant should eventually release

him, and that God and man shall at last be reconciled. We do know the title of the last of the three dramas on Prometheus, and that it was Prometheus Unbound. We also know from his other work that Æschylus was a believer in the moral qualities of Zeus, and that he could not have closed the tragedies with the impression left by the only one we have. So we have, after all, sufficient data to draw safe conclusions.

Æschylus was speaking to a public which would have very quickly resented any mark of impiety. The drama was given at a religious festival, had for its object the teaching of religion, and had to enter into competition with others for the right of presentation.

His mind would have been quick to detect the necessity for reconciliation between God and man. All the elements for such reconciliation had already been introduced. All the forces, so little understood, so mysterious, were moving toward "the far-off divine event." The abused and hapless Io, representing not "wisdom"

or "foresight," but just plain, suffering, unrecognizing humanity, was suffering for an end. By and by he who was born of her should be the means of Prometheus's release. Heracles was to be a divine incarnation that should end the sufferings and the impiety of Prometheus. What wonder that early Christians caught up quickly the analogy, or that the Grecians so often identified Christ with their Hercules!

b. THE NECESSITY OF RECONCILIATION ON THE PART OF ZEUS

In such a case as this Æschylus felt that it was not sufficient that reconciliation should be on one side. The mystery contained in the inexplicable cruelties of Zeus must be made clear. They must have some eventual moral reason and they must be for good to man. Perhaps, as one suggests,[1] Zeus, himself made perfect by suffering, will relent of his hard reign, and at last, far off, the mystery of evil will be solved. When the infant Hercules lays low the

[1] Campbell, Guide to Tragedy, p. 199.

vulture that has daily torn the vitals of Prometheus, the agony of the ever-recurring problem will be no more. "Foresight," the best attainment of human wisdom, was sufficient only to intensify the problem. In reconciliation and obedience to the will of God alone lay the way to peace. God seemed inhuman, there was no avoidance of the issue. But, somewhere, when man had the sufficient data of experience, and had himself sufficiently progressed in moral attainment, all would be made clear. The heart thus fortressed throws itself back upon the Everlasting Arms, as Æschylus makes his chorus to sing in the Agamemnon:

> "On him I cast my troublous care,
> My only refuge from despair:
> Weighing all else in him alone I find
> Relief from this vain burden of the mind.
> . . . Zeus, who prepared for men
> The path of wisdom, binding fast
> Learning to suffering."

What higher revelation than this could there be for the Grecian mind, till Christ should come? Æschylus had held by the highest course that was possible to human

wisdom. He was the prophet of what Christ fully revealed, for who could know, either then or now, that God is not inhuman, except as he reads the truth in the face of Christ? I think I see love and goodness in its highest human expression in the face that once bent above my cradle. But even in that face, now glorified by memory and the years, there was not perfect patience, nor perfect holiness. It is not enough. I must find that human face which is also the face of God before I can know of a very truth that God is love. And this I have in Christ. Any picture of God that contrasts with the love of Christ I instantly reject as spurious. No man can confuse me on that point. What was blind to Æschylus to me is certain—my God is Eternal Love, because I have seen his image in the face of Christ.

THE SECOND STEP

JOB—THE STRUGGLE WITH THE MYSTERY OF PAIN

CHAPTER V

"WHEN THE STORM OF DEATH ROARS SWEEPING BY"

Job, the Drama of Doubt, Deepest in Its Hold on Life

Of all the dramas that deal with doubt it should occasion no surprise that the greatest should spring from the Hebrew race. The place of the book of Job in the Old Testament canon is an eternal argument for the right of a reverent skepticism. Its place in the Bible is like the place of Thomas, the questioner, in the discipleship of Jesus. We do not often realize the debt we owe to this rare book for its poetic, singing lines. No poet of the ages is quoted so commonly in daily life. The words of Job have entered into the natural and common speech of man wherever the Bible is known. What holy grief does not attempt to climb upward to the submission

of those lines, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away"? Whose trials or confusions have not been lightened by the thought of that place, where "the wicked cease from troubling; and the weary be at rest"? What despair fails to remind itself that "Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward"? or that one's days are "swifter than a weaver's shuttle"? Who has not braced himself in sorrow with Job's assurance,

"He knoweth the way that I take;
When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold"?

And so there are a hundred other lines which are so interwoven in English speech that we repeat them without knowing their origin. What a testimony is this to the vital value of the book!

The False Estimate of Happiness

While the problem of the book of Job is very similar to that of Prometheus Bound, there are certain very marked points of difference. We can only guess what the genius and spiritual insight of Æschylus

may have added to the solution of the problem in those parts of the drama which have been lost.

Prometheus is a hero. He withstands a cruel and unjust god. But he is himself a god, and therefore is immortal. He knows his love and passion for men will survive even if Zeus is dethroned and cast to the scrap-heaps of time. His heroism is a heroism against any possible suffering.

Job is a greater hero. He stands up to ask his question of life when to ask it is, in the common thought, blasphemy that may be immediately resented by a God who can not only deepen his suffering, but can take his life and perpetuate his suffering in the life to come. His friends picture God as sending material prosperity to the righteous and adversity to the sinful. If a man suffers, it is because God is angry at his sins, and will get even. Job knows that this theory does not square with life. He too often sees the robber and the plunderer blessed by prosperity. If God has no deeper sense of righteousness than

to call "getting on in the world"—robbing by legal process—righteous, he will defy him.

His friends confuse worldly happiness with the smile of God. Their object of worship is to be fortunate here and hereafter. They will be honest because it is the best policy. They will subsidize their religion and make it pay both temporal and eternal dividends. Job strikes through the mists of this false philosophy and irreligious religion and presses toward the heights. Happiness and sorrow are the incidents of life. They come to the just and the unjust alike. There are greater things than happiness. To be true to his own soul is better than to be happy. Here he will rest. Here at last he attains the plains of peace.

The Story and Problem

The opening scene of the drama is laid in heaven. Among the sons of God comes the Adversary, from walking to and fro in the earth. He is the cynic who delights in discovering and showing up the weaknesses

of human nature. He has many kin in modern society, some of whom mistake their cynicism for superior morality and religion. He replies to God's satisfaction in Job with a sneer that Job doesn't serve God for nothing. This sneer of Satan gives the motif of the drama—religion as a matter of barter. It is the implication that no men are religious save for what they hope to get out of it. Satan is given his will for the testing of Job.

Upon a day a servant comes running to tell him that while his men were plowing with the beasts in the field, suddenly all have been carried away by mountain bandits. While this one is yet speaking, another comes to say that lightning has fallen and consumed both the sheep and the shepherds. His story is not yet told when another hastens to say that the Chaldeans have fallen upon the camels and have taken them away. While this messenger tells the story of disaster, lo! another, coming, tells him that his sons and daughters lie dead in the ruins of their home. So far Job's answer to calamity is this, "The Lord

gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

But Satan is permitted a yet deeper test. To leave no room for doubt as to his being singled out for sorrow, Job is smitten with leprosy, a disease that by the Oriental was considered the supreme evidence of divine displeasure. Outside every Eastern city stood a great mound, where through centuries the offal of the city had been borne. Here in the dust, ashes, and filth is taken the suffering Job, abhorred of men, cast off by his wife, whose sardonic advice is to "say good-by to God and die." Menials, whose fathers he would not have trusted with the dogs that guarded his flocks, pass by mocking. His tale is on every lip. It reaches at last far-away friends who have known him in his days of greatness, and are perchance drawn to visit him as much by curiosity as by love. Far off, they discern the solitary figure of their friend upon the ash heap, but so changed and loathsome by disease and neglect as to be unrecognizable. In accordance with Oriental courtesy, they wait through seven days and nights silent

till Job shall speak. Finally he begins to curse the day of his birth and to lay the depths of his sorrow before them. Their answer was in strict keeping with the prevailing theology. These calamities are the testimony of God's judgment upon his past sins. He is not the man they supposed him to be. Job defies a God that would punish without a trial and conviction, but they are inexorable in their belief of his sin. At last the real secret of their advocacy of this inhuman God breaks upon him. They are defending an unjust God because it is safest to keep in with the Almighty. They dare not question the traditional God for fear they will lose their souls. They claim there must be about him some sin which he has concealed from everybody. The fact of his suffering lets it out. Job can only reply that his heart does not condemn him. But his friends say that before the Infinite Holiness lie sins of which the mortal is unconscious. To this view they are driven by their adherence to the traditional theology. They dare not face the deepest questions honestly for fear of offending God.

They will defend the God of tradition even when their convictions are against them. This is Job's moment of heartbreak. He can no longer trust his friends. The solitary figure upon the ash heap is solitary indeed. The last bond of mortal companionship is snapped. He stands alone in the universe with God.

God answers him out of the whirlwind. As Elihu is repeating his pious platitudes in a last effort to save the argument of the three silenced friends, and to condemn Job, a storm arises. At first, when it is far away, he uses it to draw moral lessons to Job's discomfiture. Soon he sees it to be an approaching whirlwind. Terrified, he cries out, "Has some one told God that I was speaking?" The conviction of his heart now told him that his pious words about God had been false. The friends crouch in terror of the lightning and the fear of being swallowed up by the storm. They are not themselves so holy but it might strike them. Their theory of religion is exposed in all its emptiness by a mere storm. It is the experience of selfish,

brutish Caliban told in its own inimitable way.

What, what? A curtain o'er the world at once!
Crickets stop hissing; not a bird—or, yes,
There scuds His raven that has told Him all!
It was fool's play, this prattling! Ha! The wind
Shoulders the pillared dust, death's house o' the move,
And fast invading fires begin! White blaze—
A tree's head snaps—and there, there, there, there, there
His thunder follows! Fool to gibe at Him!
Lo lieth flat and loveth Setebos!
. . . . . .
Will let those quails fly, will not eat this month
One little mess of whelks, so he may 'scape.[1]

No thunderstorm has power to add to the depth of Job's troubles. Death would be welcome to him. He alone of all that company is undisturbed. His friends' terror refutes their respect for their theology. But God has a word to say to Job. Out of the sublimity of the storm he "hears a deeper voice across the storm." He learns how small is his place in the vastness of the universe, to which his individual

[1] Browning, Caliban on Setebos.

suffering is but as an ugly dream of the night. God's ways are past finding out. Trust on! He may never be happy, but out of his pain he has come into God's Holy Place. He finds that there is a peace deeper than that which comes by material happiness. His sense of righteousness and devotion to the will of God is his peace and his reward.

The close of the book is only incidental. The return of material joys is not needed, for Job has learned the secret of happiness. It is added, rather, to keep the literary balance of the book and to furnish a satisfaction for those who could not read its deeper philosophy of life.

CHAPTER VI

DEFENDING TRADITION AGAINST LIGHT

The Inadequate Theology of Job's Day

The prevailing theology of Job's day is represented as being that God will reward righteousness with temporal prosperity. This was the teaching of Malachi, whose prophecies had probably before this become the vogue, and obedience to which had not brought the anticipated rewards. He urged the return of the people to tithing, in order to insure the fertility of the field, and perchance to avoid also the threatened Edomite invasion. That, surely, was a bold reaction which in the book of Job dared affirm that material prosperity alone was insufficient to indicate holiness of life. How deeply this question and its resulting theology must have been driven into the national and individual life we may guess from the pages of Israel's literature, il-

luminated by the pages of her history. The days of religious faultlessness, after the return from exile, and the rebuilding of the temple, had not been met by prosperity. She had never been more true to her faith, more punctilious to the jot and tittle of the law, than in the days of the Persian ascendancy. Her theory of God led her to believe that though Israel had suffered for her sins in the past, now she had learned her lesson and was to come into the summit of her power. In the meantime the land was harried by Edomite and Nabatean. The more religious were the ones upon whom the stroke fell heaviest. The old thought that suffering was the wrath of God on sin did not suffice for the solution of her problem. Neither was there help in the later theory that suffering is God's warning to escape deeper judgment. We may be sure these words were written near some crisis in the national life when the justification of God's ways had been brought to a standstill, and men were left horror-struck and lonely in the apparent absence of a divine providence. The

moment had come when a large proportion of the people could see that very often the righteous man was made to suffer. Yea, his very righteousness intensified the suffering, for he was troubled continually by the flings of a troubled conscience, while his conscienceless and ungodly neighbor reaped his stolen gains undisturbed, and lived anew, unrebuked, in the generations that came after him. The question here presented was the existence of suffering when one had lived up to the fullest light of revelation granted him, and felt within his heart that he had done the best he knew. Even then the facts of life proved that in specific cases there was suffering, that suffering was long continued, and that its purpose was not clear. Thus a theology that had been sufficient for the earlier and cruder days of Israel's experience was now found to be broken down in the face of the stress of life, and the great question remained of how one should conduct his life in the circumstances. How one could face the facts and keep the faith was Job's problem.

Adequate Only in Theory

The book admits that there is one class to whom the old theory of temporal rewards and punishments is sufficient. The theory is perfectly adequate for the three friends who are in comfortable circumstances, and also for the youth, Elihu, with his limited experience. It is easy to read the moral and spiritual lessons of disaster to our friends so long as we ourselves are comfortable. It gives a glow of superior wisdom, a feeling of superior management and of superior traits of character, that we are prospered, while the brother at our side goes down in ruin. It is entirely human to think, if he had directed his life according to our wisdom, he would not now be suffering. So we fill up his cup of bitterness with good advice, gratuitously and hopefully given. The truth is we do not understand the problem. Its deeper thrust is not brought home to us until the weapon of pain stabs us wide awake. Our house of complacency goes down about us in hopeless wreck. Out of the ruins we try to

patch some theory that will enable us to go on and will keep life from utter despair and failure. Commonplaces that sounded to us like the profoundest philosophies to assuage others' woes we now find utterly empty and inadequate. Many theories of evil are adequate for our day of power and prosperity. Whence comes he who can answer the problem of our day of sorrow? The minister comes and utters his well-meaning words, the solemn-faced friends speak conventionalities, but sorrow is an indivisible thing—it is all our own. It stalks like a specter through all our days. It sits an unwelcome guest at our fireside and makes the richest viands of our tables tasteless. Theories may be adequate for those who do not suffer. They are inadequate for him who suffers.

The Defense of Tradition Against the Facts

The gap that yawned between Job and his three friends was not then entirely intellectual nor theological. Their theory and Job's had been identical in the old

happy days. But the swift succession of untoward events had put a great gulf between them. They could not come together because they were not discussing the question on the same plane. The three friends and Elihu were arguing from the standpoint of a traditional belief without those deeper facts of experience which alone could have made them conscious of the failure of their theory. This is a situation that frequently recurs in theological discussion. There is always barrenness and futility when the intellectual settlement of the problems of life is separated from actual experience. This accounts for the frequency with which the purposes of God are hid from the wise and prudent and revealed unto babes. So much must be said for the immediate aspects of the situation. There was this further complication: the friends were defending a well-established theory. This theory they made the mistake of identifying with the eternal order of truth. It was to them a divine and eternal revelation, unchangeable, undevelopable, unanswerable. Out of such a position two

ideas immediately arose into prominence. If these theories were eternally revealed truths, any man who, like Job, questioned them was, to use their phrase, condemned the moment he opened his mouth. In the second place, any facts of nature or experience which contradicted their eternally inspired theory must be denied or taken by the shoulder and led quietly away where they could be conveniently cast into the outer darkness. If one is eternally sure that he has the unadulterated, unmodifiable truth, what need is there for light? what place is there for further light?

All these facts took intense and dramatic form in the dealing of the friends with Job. Job held throughout his trial to two fundamentals which were like an anchor of his soul and which moored him to God until the storm was past. He refused to belie the good testimony of his own conscience, and he refused also to believe that God was an unjust being whose ways with men needed to be justified by a lie or by a denial of the darkest facts of history or of life.

To his friends Job had been the human

ideal of righteous conduct. Even now in his deep distress they appeal to that refuge of a certain type of theology—imputed sin. There must be a great deal of sin in him which they could not see, of which Job himself was not conscious, but which was plain to the Eternal. There could be no question of his wickedness, for, if so, why did he suffer? The fact of Job's righteousness is brought into square contradiction with the traditional theory. To question the traditional theory is impious. The only thing left is to commit the sin against common sense and deny the facts. Job must be a wicked man.

Now, upholding eternally sure theories against disagreeable facts has some very patent weaknesses. For instance, it is an evidence of unfaith and irreligion. Shutting one's eyes to the facts, even for the sake of God and the divine order of truth, is not so much a matter of faith as it seems to be. For if this is God's world, then his manifestation of himself in the world of the present cannot be denied. If, then, our theory is found in contradiction to his

revelation of himself in the world of life and of thought to-day, there is room for a suspicion that what we thought eternal was but a partial truth, needing revision. It can never be necessary to deny the facts of life and experience in order to defend the truth. On the other hand, any supposed truth that needs to be thus defended is only a passing theory. Of one thing we may be sure: we can lie down to our resting beds in peace knowing full well that no discovery can be made overnight that will sweep away the truth. Yea, though our resting bed be that of the long, long night, we may know that Truth's candle will not be blown out by any blast that can blow in God's world. Some "will-o'-the-wisps" are sure to go out, but the light of Truth never! If a man is certain of truth, then he is never called to defend it by questionable means. Any fear on his part of its overthrow shows that he is but half convinced himself, or is so joined to his idols that he wishes his theory to remain even though it prove to be a lie. Such is an essentially irreligious attitude of mind.

When Job made the discovery that his friends were ready to defend their conception of God by denying the facts, his indignation knew no bounds. Hope lay quenched within his heart. "Will ye lie for God?" he cries. His scorn for such a theory and such a God is without limit. In such a light Job's doubt looks more like faith in God than all the settled belief of his friends. Job's world of experience was too large to be accounted for by his friends' theology. Their standpoint of upholding God's justice by denying the facts of experience was insufficient for him, as it must be for every great sufferer. To doubt our insufficient and inadequate faith may be an act of religion and the doorway into larger faith.

Where Lies Faith?

Who, then, is the man of faith? Surely not he who dares not trust his truth to the buffetings of intellectual criticism and the storms of human experience. Surely not he who can commit mental dishonesty to uphold the truth. To lie for God is the

most pernicious atheism. It denies the power of truth to stand for itself and eventually to command the minds of men. In this book of doubt Job is not the doubter. He is the only man of real faith. The faith of the friends must inevitably fall under such shocks of life as had come to Job. Job said, "I will believe in a righteous God against all appearances." He would cling to the witness of his heart though God were to slay him. His friends saw the facts of life arrayed directly against the conception of God in which they had been brought up. Yet they insisted on belief against the facts. Here the absence of doubt was not the evidence of religion. It was the evidence of inexperience, of shallow thinking and of mental dishonesty. Who, then, is the man of faith? It is the man who, crushed by the hand of sorrow, has looked into brassy and unanswering skies all forsaken, yet in the darkness and numbness of his heart has held fast to the God whom he could no longer see, nor feel, nor understand. Not he upon whose mental calm has never blown the disturbing wind

of deeper questionings that will not be put by, but he who has seen the faith of early days lie shattered, and who, despite the storm, holds true to the fundamental loyalties. His house is founded on a rock.

"Defender of the Faith" may not, then, be so high a title as the world has supposed. Truth needs only to be spoken. Its defense is never needed. The faith that men defend is all too likely to be the passing theory or "ism" of a day. Surely the amount of noise that attends its proclamation is not to be taken as an evidence of its eternity. "He shall not strive nor cry . . . in the streets." His truth, nevertheless, marches on to the conquest of the world. It can never be gainsaid, however plausible the theories, however hoary the institutions, that would bar its progress. The foundation of God standeth sure on these two principles: God's recognition of his children in this world of time and the unanswerable argument of lives that have departed from iniquity. If only we could be grounded on these eternal facts, then we had no need to be disturbed by changing

mental conceptions of this or any age. No possible intellectual or scientific discovery could have given us fear, and all our religious energy might have been released for the bringing of Christ's kingdom in the world of to-day and in the hearts of our friends and neighbors.

CHAPTER VII

A RELIGION OF BARTER

The Religion Satan Sneered At

The crisis of the drama of Job comes with the discovery on the part of Job that his friends are ready to deny the facts of his own integrity in order to save their theology. The reason for this soon appears to him. They do not intend to mince words with one who is so evidently heretical. The defense of the Almighty becomes a passion. It is the only safe method to take with an Almighty whose ways with man are so incomprehensible and who punishes for the secret thought of the heart.

One must not imagine that they were without all feelings of sympathy for their old-time friend. The contrast of former prosperity with present abjectness was all too pronounced. They must not, however, let feelings of sympathy for his suffering

hold them back from speaking the disagreeable truth. Job certainly must be very wicked. His real wickedness must be in proportion to his suffering. If, now, he will only get after this secret sin which they have been unable to discover and which he disavows, all may yet be well.

"Who ever perished, being innocent?" says Eliphaz. Bildad follows up with the declaration that doubtless Job's children had received the just reward of their deeds, and Job was spared because for him there was some reserve of hope. Seek the Almighty with pure hands and he will send prosperity again.

Job replies out of the depth of a bitter experience that he sees the earth given into the hand of the wicked, while God permits the faces of judges to be covered. So far as the external appearance goes,

> If I be wicked, woe unto me;
> And if I be righteous, yet shall I not lift up my head.

What is the use of appealing to such a God, a God of temporal rewards and punishments, who rewards and punishes according

to these known facts? What use to appeal to such a tribunal?

Zophar says, "Your sin is one of doctrine"—

> If thou set thy heart aright, . . .
> Surely then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot.

But Job, reasoning on their basis, replies, "I cannot, however, get past the facts"—"The tents of robbers prosper." They are only lying about his integrity to save their God of barter from the embarrassing question, "What about the prosperity of the wicked?"

Eliphaz is shocked by Job's impiety, but declares the prosperity of the wicked is temporary and external, and accompanied by the greatest mental terrors.

Ah! it is not, then, a question of external rewards! But have they not been arguing his wickedness from external punishments? Bildad becomes hard, upbraiding his presumption of innocence from his own internal consciousness. The old argument was for a moment in grave danger of cutting off its own head. Job feels the injustice

of their words and cries out, "I know that my Vindicator liveth."

Zophar interrupts, to bring him back to the argument:[1]

> "The joy of the godless is for a moment."
> "Wherefore then," says Job, "do the wicked live,
> Become old, yea, wax mighty in power?
> Their seed is established with them in their sight
> . . . . . .
> Their houses are safe from fear."

Instead of being mentally disturbed they gather comfort from their lack of fear of Jehovah, "having consciences seared as with an hot iron." "But," says Eliphaz, "their prosperity is uncertain."

"How often is it blown away like chaff?" is Job's appeal to fact.

"God layeth up his iniquity for his children," says Bildad.

Job replies, "Let God punish the responsible party, not the innocent."

And so the debate goes on in the attempt to prove that it is altogether well to be religious, if one is to enjoy the life that now

[1] Following Professor Moulton's suggestion in the Modern Reader's Bible.

is. Religion after this order is just the kind at which Satan had sneered. It was just the kind that Satan had declared Job's was. If only nothing further were to be gained in temporal reward, and only days of unalleviable pain stretched out before him, Job would be like all the rest of these barter saints. Satan's only mistake was in thinking the only religion practiced by men was a religion of barter. He was not wrong in his contempt for a religion that did right for a reward. A religion that loves righteousness chiefly because it deplores purging fires, a religion that loves honesty because the gains that way are largest, a religion that loves truth not for its own sake but as the means of escaping torment, is a religion that breaks down at the moment it is most needed. It is sure to fail when the divine smile seems withdrawn. Instead of building character on eternal principles of right and wrong, it settles itself down to an external code of conduct, a hollow category of external exercises, which it hopes will bring eternal blessedness. There can be no true nor

growing institution in which the religious appeal is based preëminently upon the selfish interest, or where this interest long remains predominant. The disciples again and again sought to press this religion of barter upon Jesus. His invariable reply was that he could only promise them bitter cups to drink, and fierce baptisms wherewith to be baptized. It was in proportion as they forgot rewards in the doing of a great and pressing task that their rewards should be. The man who is good for a consideration is like the child that is courteous for a piece of candy. There is for the moment the external appearance wished for, but there is an eternal insufficiency of character. The setting forth of the appeal on this lower plane of being good for a reward rather than for love of truth, righteousness, and God has not been without its disastrous results. In our midst is the religious bargain-hunter who strives continually to beat down the Almighty to the smallest possible gifts and sacrifices that may succeed in saving his soul. Grace has little chance where the rewards of time and

sense are so carefully adjusted with the Eternal. The words of Jesus fall with startling rebuke across the ages: "Where the treasure is there will the heart be also."

Righteousness for Its Own Sake

It seems strange to us to have to listen to such a message as this from across the many centuries and to realize how slow has been the growth toward the fact so clearly recognized by Job—that righteousness must be its own sufficient reward. "Though he slay me, yet will I wait for him," says Job. There was a truth dangerous to neglect in the declaration of the older Calvinists of a willingness to be damned for the glory of God. That gruesome interpretation of God which required eternal torture for some, regardless of the character of their lives, is well passed as an impossible horror of the night. Who is prepared to say that it is much inferior to a conception of a God that saves by a stroke of magic, such as are looking rather toward a reward than toward the establish-

ment of a Godlike character, and the building of a kingdom of heaven among men? We haven't gotten far toward the religion of the Master until we have thrown over the whole system of religious barter and reached that happy place where we will do right, "though goods and kindred go and mortal life also," yea, even though to do right means infinite loss, which, of course, it cannot. That religion can scarcely hope to rise above the trivial which expects to sell a few poor vain and empty satisfactions here and gain thereby an eternal satisfaction of a similar kind.

To the Almighty the chief consideration cannot be that we are rich or well clothed or fare sumptuously every day. Neither does he expect immortal souls to be satisfied with that sort of program in the life to come. The deepest tragedy of our mortal life springs from the everlasting ennui of people who have things—comforts, pleasures, honors, prides—instead of character. The note of their wailing pessimism is abroad in the land. We need but to ask a question out of the depths of our own eternal spirits to

realize the emptiness of such satisfactions. To have them prolonged for all eternity would be to introduce man to a tedious world made unending.

God has set us in the world to learn to love him, to love him so much that we will want to be like him. He desires in us, not a passion to escape a divine wrath, but a passion to be like Jesus Christ. Above all, he would not have this end in self. He wants us to have a passion for the coming of the kingdom of Jesus Christ among men. He wants every follower a flaming messenger to declare the need of man for reconciliation with the divine order. He gives no place for stop or stay, no place to remember our selfish gains or to count our selfish losses until that kingdom has come in power. We must be good because to be good is to be like God. It is to be in full harmony with God's world. It is to fulfill the highest mission and possibility of one's own spirit. It is to bring the greatest possible good to the largest number. It is, in the end, to make God dwell with men, and to bring the day when sorrow and sighing shall flee

away, injustice shall end, and man shall have come into his kingdom.

A New Note in Christian Teaching

With such a conception of religion there should come a new note in Christian teaching. The appeal should be made no longer to the spirit of barter, but to that which is highest and deepest in man. Men need to be approached not from the side of personal profit, but from the side of eternal righteousness and duty. To say that the personal-profit appeal is the most winning appeal is to slander humanity. Men need to be told of their own responsibility for the present evil conditions of the world. They need to be made to see that to take the good things of this life and to render inadequate return to God is the act of a sneak. They need to know that the wrath of God abides upon all those who in selfish ease turn aside from the divine order of self-surrender. The wrath of God rests upon the children of disobedience. They need to know that there is no subterfuge of convention or custom that can excuse them or allow them

to escape a righteous judgment upon any careless living that allows a large portion of society to rot in degradation, poverty, and misery. They need to know that society demands their best powers, that only through the giving of those powers can they be the best for those around them, that only so can they be true to their own best selves. We must hold fast to God with the diligence with which the compassless mariner guides his course by an unfailing star. Only so can man come into the desired haven. The Church of Christ has a most wonderful message yet to give, and when she gives it generally she will come into a new day of power.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PLAINS OF PEACE

The Things that Time and Sense Cannot Restore

There is one fundamental position which Job takes toward evil that is good for our own age to consider. He did not blink at the hard aspects of the problem thrust upon him. He did not fall into the ways of modern pessimism by declaring that the existence of evil makes empty the hope of a righteous God. On the other hand, he avoided that idiotic optimism which declares that evil is an error of mortal mind. His problem is fairly put: "God is good, yet evil is real, this is the antithesis."[1] Job attempts no mental gymnastics nor moral inconsistencies to hide from himself the real problem.

Eliphaz tells him his righteousness is of

[1] Wenley, Aspects of Pessimism, p. 18.

no particular moment to God. His sorrow proves him a great sinner. Be converted and happy. What is the use of trying to maintain his cause? Accept appearances and succumb to them! In that moment Job cries out for God to judge him. His mind is not to be stifled from the recognition of the problem involved. Even though the prosperity of the wicked is but temporary, and even though shutting his eyes and worshiping an unjust God would bring the return of prosperity, who could restore for him "the years that the locust had eaten"? In a little while Sheol would swallow all anyway. Job was coming to the point where his friends' idea of happiness, and the one that had once satisfied him, was not large enough. There were things that no turn of fortune could restore to him. The return of flocks, and herds, and servants, and greetings in the market, and those high human honors of which he had been deprived, would not bring happiness. The darkness of his doubt was deepening, but it was the darkness that precedes the dawn. There was in his heart the

realization that his deepest blessings were not, after all, material. There was the broken love of a wife that was worse than death. There were the silenced voices of children, the memory of whose cradle-songs wrung his heart. There were things that were gone forever, and which no turn of fortune could restore, for loss is loss, and pain is bitter pain. What can the empty years bring to fill again the dashed cup of life? That is a superficial view that looks on joy as if it were for sale in the market place, or could be purchased with gold and honors.

The Thing that Is Better than Happiness

"There is in man a Higher than Love of Happiness: he can do without Happiness, and instead thereof find Blessedness." The truth thus voiced by Carlyle[1] was the truth to which Job was being brought on the wings of his troubled experience. The faithlessness of his wife, the infidelity of his long-trusted friends, had removed from

[1] Sartor Resartus, book ii, chap. ix.

him every human prop. There was nothing left him in all the universe but God, and his friends were trying to rob him of this last resource, in order to save their theology. No refuge of lies could become the haven of his storm-beaten heart. Only a God of truth and righteousness could save him from ultimate despair. To this he clung with desperation. To the witness of his own inner soul he clung likewise, and at last he learned the comfort of being at one with God—the supreme blessedness of fellowship with God. When he had arrived at this Everlasting Yea, neither the disasters of time, nor the breaking of his early love, nor the false theories and heartlessness of his friends could disturb him more. He learned that there existed something better than happiness, which was joy.

The whole misconception of the friends sprang from a false ideal of joy. They identified it with happiness, and happiness is a variable quantity in a world of sin. Joy may be permanent. Happiness is the blessing of a very few. Joy may be the possession of every man. Happiness is the

goal of small spirits; its search leads into the shallows of life, and leaves man eventually disillusioned and despairing. Joy grows with the years and the passing of experience. Happiness, such as it is, is dependent on the things of time and sense. It grows with prosperity, attends upon the friendly nod of men, but is hopelessly eclipsed in the deeper passages of life. The current of immortal spirits runs deeper than the superficial circumstances of the world. If it did not, man would be in no wise superior to the passing show of the world. Because he is or may be eternal, he can rise to higher peace and become the master of his soul only as happiness becomes incidental, and he has looked upon the face of Joy.

The Partial Nature of Human Experience

When at last Job had attained to the point where he could meet God on the plane of mutual relations, the Dreadful Voice began to speak to him out of the whirlwind. The things disclosed to him were these:

He had considered only the mystery of evil. Happiness he had taken as the common lot and expectation of man. But as he looked about him with clearer vision he discovered that joy was as difficult and as mysterious as evil. Nature, with her singing birds and lowing flocks, her seas lifting their voice of eternal praise—this was an all but universal chorus of joy. In this glad universe good and bad, deserving and undeserving were invited to partake, and God was over all his works, rejoicing in them.

It is easy for us to project the shadow of our sorrow over the universe, or from our personal seclusion to talk of the sum of human evil as if all the suffering of the world could be computed like arithmetical factors, and one could come to the positive conclusion that the evil outweighs the good. But the vanity of all such philosophizing can be shown the moment we bring our theory to the test of life. The world-weary and despondent are very often the best fed. The times when men would welcome death, however great their miseries, would more than often be dispelled by its

recognized approach. Much of our pessimism is but the shadow cast by aimlessness and failure to enter upon one's way of moral duty.

Another fact that was brought home to Job with startling clearness by the Voice out of the whirlwind was the relative insignificance of his sorrow in the vast scheme of things. This is a healthful thought for any man who sits down to mourn his misfortune. Had Job suffered? So had countless other men. He was but one unit in a world that was too vast for computation. Might it not be that in so vast a universe he was repining over a single page in the book of life, simply because, under his human limitations, he had no means of reading the other chapters of the book, that revealed the plot and ending? Had Job not been weak in this, that he had yielded to sorrow? He had cursed the day of his birth, as if the whole universe were centered in his happiness, the whole world clouded by his loss. In thus arraigning the Eternal Goodness he had not taken a worthy position, with his limited knowledge

and his own personal story but half read. He had conducted himself more like a hireling than like a hero. The first advice of the Voice is "that he stand upon his feet like a man." It was time to stop his wailing like a fretful child, to begin to look his sorrow in the face like a man, and to think of himself in a world where there were others with their hearts of sorrow.

Understanding Not Necessary to Peace

And then there came to him out of the storm this deeper consciousness, that understanding was not essential to peace. Here had been a weakness not only of his friends, but a weakness that attends all attempt to meet the mystery of suffering with argument. Deep sorrow goes beyond the possibility of any philosophy to explain. Yet, though it may never be intellectually discerned, it is not a problem beyond solution. If Job's friends had been allies of truth, and possessed of the deepest mental insight, their efforts would have been but measurably more successful than they were. It is not given to you or me to understand

our sorrow. We cannot understand why our dearest should have been taken, nor why the home of happiness should be broken when there are so many that face the constant tragedy of lovelessness—why sacrifice should be met with hate. We cannot understand.

Doubt Not to be Solved Intellectually—to Have God Is Enough

The reason for this is not far to see. Paradoxical as it may seem, real doubt is not, cannot be, solved intellectually, but only by an inner experience of truth. One can with all happiness burned out yet learn to trust, to serve, to be faithful, to find his joy in a new world of sympathy. When, upon his ash heap, lonely and disconsolate, this truth breaks in upon him, Job cries out, "I have heard of thee with the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee." Within his heart there blossomed a great joy. His soul had arisen at last from the ashes of ruin. He had attained the plains of peace. In the presence of the living God he had the best that life could give; without

him every pleasure, every fullness was but vanity. We can now understand the claim that the fundamental thought of the book is "the indestructible personal relationship between God and the individual."[1]

Perhaps we ought not to close our consideration of this greatest poem of literature without a summing up of the ground gained. The book teaches that no unworthy conception of God, however deeply engraved in custom, belief, habit, or prejudice, can remain. Only that which makes for righteousness makes for permanence. So also no course of human action, no religion which is not founded on this conception, can endure the stress of actual life. No comfort to the soul can permanently come from a denial of pain, or of the reality of the devastations of the years. But above all passing joys one may rise into Joy. For confirmation of this truth we need only to recall the experience of One named the Man of Sorrows. In the last hour of his life there came what seems like a moment of suspense and doubt. The unforgotten

[1] Bunsen, God in History, vol. i, p. 183.

cry of the ages was this: "Why hast thou forsaken me?" Happiness was far away—happiness of mind or body. But soon there came another word—"Into Thy hands . . . my spirit." Out of the pain there came the peace of his Father's will.

The message of Job may be read in the light of the experience of Jesus. It is a living message, not an intellectual one. Trust on, trust on "till morning break and the shadows flee away."

THE THIRD STEP

HAMLET—THE STRUGGLE WITH THE PROBLEM OF AN OUTRAGED MORAL ORDER

CHAPTER IX

THE HEART OF TRAGEDY—PRACTICAL DOUBT

Hamlet's a Practical Doubt

The doubt of Prometheus sprang from a view of God that had by the march of events, the lesson of history, become no longer tenable. That doubt was answered by the appeal to time as able to show an eventual reconciliation in which all would be made plain. The doubt of Job sprang out of the personal suffering of the individual, the finding and explanation of personal destiny. This was met by an appeal to the probability that a perfect experience —the complete view of life—would bring the solution of what from the incomplete human standpoint must seem irreconcilable contradiction. The doubt of Hamlet is of another order and one more closely akin to the pessimism of our own age. It arose

from arrested impulses to moral action, which issued in a sense of the futility of life as over against its tasks. Hamlet's doubt was practical doubt.

The Story and Problem

Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, is called from his studies at the University of Wittenberg by the sudden death of his father, the king. His uncle succeeds to the throne, and within two months becomes the husband of his late brother's queen. This hasty marriage arouses in Hamlet the suspicion of foul play in his father's death. This suspicion is confirmed by the appearance of his father's ghost and by the attitude of the guilty king and queen when a strolling band of actors presents a similar situation in the play which he facetiously names "The Mouse-trap."

When the truth of the situation is made clear to him, the one task thrust upon him is to discover and expose the crime. In this he is met by certain almost insuperable obstacles—the power of the king, the ease with which he can secure parties to his

crimes, the unfaithfulness of the queen-mother, the weak falsity of Ophelia, the almost complete lack of those who will lend support. Added to all this is an evil heart of unbelief in Hamlet himself, a propensity to soliloquize when most he should act. Rather than directing action he is driven to action only by the almost irresistible current of events. In the end he becomes so entangled in the network of intrigue and evil that he loses his own life and draws in the train of ruin guilty and innocent alike. At last the wrong is righted by accident rather than by intent. Hamlet finds his feeble impulse seconded by that Nemesis in the heart of evil by which it works its own destruction.

The heart of Hamlet's tragedy lay in the fact that his life did not follow the truth which his mind affirmed. He was placed over against circumstances to which he should have risen superior, but which, on the other hand, made him their servant. He had faith enough in the technical sense. There was no questioning of the creed. He would not slay the fratricide at his prayers,

lest the magic of the church should save the hardened criminal. In a formal way no fault could have been found with his mental beliefs. His doubt was of that practical kind which doubts the divine hand in the present action.

The Unethical Character of Intellectual Belief

In this Shakespeare has drawn the picture truly. There is a sense in which men are not responsible for their convictions. Any man who seeks the illumination of the truth is bound to believe what is forced upon him as being true. He has no option to say, "Thus far I will accept what appears truth, and no farther." For the man who can commit such a sin against his own individuality to save any preconceived notion or traditional point of view God reserves a special judgment of wrath. He blinds him —puts out his intellectual eyes—that "seeing" he may "see, and shall not perceive." It becomes an act of folly, then, to assail men for their intellectual beliefs, even though they be in error. Their par-

ticular viewpoint, and ours as well, may be due to the bias of prejudice, training, temperament, predisposition. Opinions spring both from knowledge and from ignorance. There are only two questions that we have a right to ask: one is, "Does this opinion square with what we know of life?", and, second, "What is its practical utility to make men better?"

In the past the chief consideration has been given to the theoretical or intellectual doubter. When we speak the words "skepticism," "unbelief," "infidelity," we refer invariably to men who fail to solve intellectual problems. By these terms we mean men whose chief difficulty is with the creed, or with the miracles, or in the interpretation of the being or person of God. In this we make a disastrous mistake. By it we often shut out the purest souls and the most earnest seekers after God, while we keep within the pale some who either have never thought deeply or are willing to commit mental dishonesty for a consideration. Intellectual clearness and faith are very important factors in a Christian life, but

they are by no means the most important. Intellectual *honesty*, on the other hand, is closely akin to spiritual power, and cannot be divorced from it. He who to-day holds an honest opinion sincerely may be only a pilgrim of truth on the way to spiritual power. If men had to wait until they were intellectually clear on all the points of doctrine before surrendering their lives to the perfect service which is freedom, this would be a most unfortunate world, and none could be saved. Intellectual doubts are not the necessary evidences of impiety. We need continually to remind ourselves of the unethical character of a great deal of the intellectual doubt that for a period sways the minds of men. When certain facts arise above the horizon of conviction, the man must yield himself to them so far as they go, or until further reflection and experience show them to be unworthy. But there could be no coming to the truth at all if men were never to trust themselves forth upon the perilous sea of new ideas and discoveries.

The Insidious Nature of Practical Doubt

We need to strike a clearer note upon the insidious character of practical doubt. There are great hosts of people who, like Hamlet, take comfort from *seeing* the truth, but who likewise fail to come to a knowledge of the truth through actual experience. Theoretical unbelief, if honestly held, and with open mind toward any new light that may come, is not a matter over which to waste much care. There is an unbelief, however, that is fatal; that is the unbelief which displays itself by departing from the living God. It is insidious in this, that it is often the sin of the man who is without intellectual doubt, and who therefore dreams himself secure in the faith. His intensity with respect to intellectual belief is often in direct proportion to his departure from *living* faith.

A man once confessed that in a certain period of his life he had been not only wicked but vile in his wickedness. He added to the recital that from which he

took great comfort: In the midst of all his wickedness he had never lost his faith. Such a definition of faith was surely in need of revision. However much we may dislike to admit it, what we intellectually believe is no particular religious credit to us. Our faith in Christ will be measured exactly by the fruits of Christ that appear in us. By that supreme test we must stand or fall. Hamlet was a practical doubter, though a theoretical believer. He saw his duty and took great comfort from seeing it. He knew there was a grievous wrong to right. He deplored the fact that he was set in the whirlpool of action. He tried to appease the conscience within him by upbraiding the faithless queen, by unmasking the murderous king, by insulting the characterless Ophelia, and by the accidental killing of the doddering Polonius. He was forever delaying to face things as they were, and to make insistent demands upon life. He went at his task with the moral cowardice that decided the parson not to attack the liquor interests which were debauching the life of his village because he was bent

upon character-building and the spiritual care of his people. The rampant unbelief of the intellectual scoffer may slay its thousands, but this practical sort of unbelief slays its tens of thousands.

The Modern Lesson in Hamlet's Problem

Thus the heart of Hamlet's tragedy may be seen to be close to the tragedy of modern life. This tragedy is now being realized through wide circles. The terrible contradiction of which men are becoming conscious in modern life is the possibility of being satisfied with a purely external or intellectual form of religion. This was a question which was likewise preëminent in Shakespeare's own age. We may state with great positiveness our beliefs in the tenets of Christian faith, but what if we take our religion out in the lazy comfort of saying it? What if our age of supposed culture, religion, intellectual attainment, shall for the most part stand idly by and see the tides of immorality and crime flow unchecked? What answer is the age to

make to the cry of the benighted childhood of the tenements? Of what use is our culture while men and women lose their footing and drop to ruin through the savage competitions of our commercial age? What gift can we put into the hand of the Almighty which shall compensate him for those blasting inequalities that mar our civilization? What if we say we believe in Jesus Christ, and in a million toiling marts neglect the children of his love, and thus crucify him afresh in this modern age and put him to an open shame? We, like Hamlet, are set upon times which it is our business to put right. We may long for the good old days of intellectual ease, if there were any, but we are in the midst of our clamorous problem, and in how we meet it or neglect it is our rise or fall. Practical unbelief is more fatal, more damning in its results than any other. Intellectual unbelief is important only in this, that when men become parties to it, holding it against light, it leads to the darker unbelief of practice. But this is likewise the end of that faith which testifies, "Lord,

Lord," but does not the will of God. Practical unbelief is the more insidious in that it can exist alongside of a calm, self-contented mind and can keep house with a so-called religious ecstasy.

The Divine Nemesis

It will be a most unhappy experience for our age if, like Hamlet, instead of directing our course, we shall be compelled to blunder into its solution. In the heart of every evil custom and of every human wrong the Almighty has placed the elements of its own undoing. This is "the heart of good in all things evil" by which God brings his day of eventual righteousness.

One has suggested[1] that Hamlet's hesitancy arose from extreme conscientiousness in the midst of the unconscientious. This is in part true. The task was thrust upon him because of all that company about the court he was the one who was aware of the moral issues involved. To become conscious of moral issues is to be burdened

[1] Ford, Shakespeare's Hamlet: A New Theory.

with a task. To neglect that task is to suffer moral shipwreck.

Upon this age, as upon no other, has come the consciousness of an existing moral and social disorder. The problem will be settled in God's good time. No unrighteousness can permanently remain. Let us utter the fervent hope that our age may be saved from the tragedy that ever attends the prevalence of practical doubt.

CHAPTER X

THE TASK BEYOND THE POWERS

The Stupendous Character of Hamlet's Task

Goethe[1] has called attention to the stupendous character of the task that was thrust upon Hamlet by circumstance. "It is quite clear to me," he says, "that what Shakespeare wished to portray was this: a great task imposed upon a soul which was incompetent to perform that task."[2]

The first shock to Hamlet was the loss of his father in the vigor and strength of his manhood. Then in quick succession came the loss of his kingdom, the discovery of the real character of his uncle, and, greatest of all, the loss of love and respect for his mother. Her complicity in the murder of his father, her incestuous union with the dead husband's brother, the utter lack of

[1] Goethe, On Shakespeare, p. 30. [2] Id., p. 31.

restraint, even of the appearance of decency, suddenly took out of his life the natural props and assurances so necessary to the peace of youth. Wherever he turned he found himself forced back by the deep-lying intrigue and falsity that had become the very atmosphere of the court. Apart from Horatio, there was no friend he could trust. The wicked king, by reason of wickedness and strength, seemed to possess every power over him, being able to bribe every friend and to accomplish through the hands of others what he would not dare to do with his own hands. There was the absence of those proofs of the king's guilt which would enable him to secure redress in legal ways. The king had the advantage which is always possessed by the unscrupulous in power. Even the heartbreak of a false mother might have been partially atoned for if Ophelia had proved herself a true woman. But here again fate was against him. Ophelia was the child of the court, and strong characters could not grow up in the midst of such surroundings. The innocence of immoral surroundings can be

scarcely better than unmoral. She could not discover in the life of her father and of the court that adherence to moral principles that would have given her character. It was because, though innocent, she was characterless that she was the easy dupe of the influences around her which were working for the undoing of her lover. It was because of this lack of character, which became more and more evident with the advent of every crisis in affairs, that Hamlet became estranged from her. He was cast upon the deepest days of his life. He was surrounded by a living tragedy. She who should have been his helpmate had been so trained that she could not even realize the forces that were driving his life forward as by the Furies. It was useless to upbraid Hamlet for his coarseness and lack of refinement toward her. It was Shakespeare's way of telling us that there were not in Ophelia those qualities which under the trying stress of the situation could command Hamlet's respect. Ophelia was the last human refuge of Hamlet's life, save only the old college mate, Horatio. Everything

was against him. To rectify the moral disorder of the court of Denmark demanded that he suppress all the finer feelings of his life, say good-by to the love of mother, sweetheart, thronging memories of the past, and literally "take up arms against a sea of troubles" in the full consciousness of outward failure and misunderstanding. He could scarcely make the first move without the forfeit of his life, and even though he gave his life, there would seem to be no promise that he would succeed in reforming the conditions of the court. He would be simply the disagreeable reformer put out of the way, whose absence meant the securer reign of evil. "To act and to love are the twin functions of the human soul."[1] These functions were denied to Hamlet by circumstance, and these have been well said to have lain at the heart of his tragedy and despair. He was called to great tasks and called without that surety of confidence which was necessary if he were to meet them greatly. A man of letters, of retiring disposition, a lover of

[1] David Starr Jordan, The Philosophy of Despair, p. 32.

peace and order, of poetic and dreamy temperament, his very learning had robbed him of the certainties that would have been strength to a less cultured man. Over his life was blown the bugle of desperate war, the demand of an overwhelming task, and the contest threatened to be won or lost before he could select the battleground of action. At every point in this task he was hurled back defeated because of his own uncertainty of mind and hesitancy of action. Where he should have had the bulwark of a strong love he was likewise disappointed. This fact added to his problem and increased his despair.

The Pessimism of Modern Life Like that of Hamlet

Because we are trying to get at the problem of despair from the modern standpoint I cannot pass without calling attention to the close analogy of this despair of Hamlet with that of the present day. This is especially pronounced in the industrial and business life of our age. Good men are conversant with the inequalities that oppress

society. They are not unaware of the moral issues at stake. But they are struck through with hopelessness at a task which seems to be beyond their powers. If they do in business and industry the things that they feel would be the plain command of the spirit of the Master, they think they would be sounding their own death knell. They would hasten to ameliorate the condition of their employees but for the fact that the competition of the unrighteous would soon drive them altogether from the field. A host of men do not anxiously desire an unjust share of the rewards of industry, and would be satisfied if conditions could be brought about that would insure fair profits to all. But immediately there arise before them the seemingly insuperable conditions of environment. They are like Hamlet, the victims of a system they do not love, and which they have not the moral strength to oppose.

The feeling of their being cast up against a problem that seems beyond practical solution, which so far has been solved only in the vagaries of imagination, is in large

part responsible for the pessimism of modern life. This pessimistic note, present with many of the best, is caught up by the avaricious and the wicked, and is made as a watch-cry of truth for the lowest elements of society. All business is denounced as being dishonest—as necessarily dishonest—and this is made the excuse for every iniquity. The political world is looked upon as the field for public exploitation for the benefit of the individual, and from this watch-cry the ward heeler gathers new effrontery. In the social world it is the same. Social inequalities are declared to be beyond remedy, wherefore a considerable portion of society gives itself over to cheap pleasure and lewdness that only accentuate the tragic and unholy inequalities of the present social state. Such is the pessimism of the present, and a little consideration will show how close of kin it is with that which filled the soul of the hapless Hamlet.

It is not without significance that Shakespeare represents Hamlet to be secure by his uncle's choice and favor in the succession to the throne. He has only to accommodate

himself to things as they are. He has only to soothe the pangs of conscience with the thought that the things that need to be remedied are beyond his power to change, and that therefore he cannot be held responsible. He has only to submit quietly to things as they are and all desired happiness—the throne, Ophelia, and a chance in coming years to reform the rotten court—will be his. It was at this point that Hamlet managed to save the last vestige of his moral self-respect. He would not submit to receive the recompense of evil; and this is why, in spite of all weakness and indecision, we love him. He would not consent to the murder of his soul for the sake of gain. There is scarcely a thinking man or woman in modern life who will not sense at once the application of this situation to our problems. How shall we cease to be partakers by profit in the wrongs of society, the cruel injustices that are forced upon helpless children, women, and men? This is the disconcerting question of our age. It is like the question which Hamlet faced.

Moral Paralysis in the Face of Tasks

"Were it not that the contradictions of life had found ally within Hamlet himself, they could not have overborne him thus. 'We are always accomplices in the evils that oppress us.' This inner reply, as it may be called, to outward questionings, is best seen in relation to that 'pale cast of thought' traditionally associated with our hero. . . . His vivid realization of the absolute value, yet comparative ineffectiveness of man, constitutes his affinity for the evil without, and renders him the more easy prey to adverse circumstances. His irony is of the highest importance in that it springs from his central being, and almost invariably sways him when in society. In solitude his candor with himself borders upon the awful. When he soliloquizes he reveals not a little of that knowledge which is the root of his bitterness."[1]

It was just this inner contradiction that was the cause of the moral and spiritual paralysis of Hamlet in the face of his tasks.

[1] Wenley, Aspects of Pessimism, pp. 104, 105.

He was not clear in his own mind regarding which way duty lay. He allowed himself to be too largely influenced by the fact that he had no show of success. He had not risen to the higher plane of unquestioning sacrifice where alone could have been found the solution of his problem. He was the victim of circumstances in this deeper sense, that at no point had he the necessary moral courage to rise superior to them. We are so constituted that God does not put great weapons in our hands to fight the world until we have begun to make use of the weapons already given. This is the secret of Jesus's life. So small a gap is there between utter failure and great success. Had he rejected that apparent setting of all hopes, the cross, he would not have been crowned with the glory and honor of the ages. Any refusal to do the nearest and most obvious duty, because it appears to offer no ultimate solution, or because it promises to put an end to all effort, is a compromise with the moral nature which brings swift decay and results in the paralysis of the moral powers.

The Sense of God in the Moral Order

The inner contradictions of Hamlet's heart could have been solved by the presence of one element which was lacking. His great lack was a lack of belief in the moral order of the universe, and this not in its abstract aspect alone. He was wanting in a firm sense of that divine Righteousness through the ages moving on, which would bring to naught every evil device. He was further unsure of its application to the society of his age. He believed too much in the evil of his world, he rated too highly the power of the wicked king, he believed too much in the power of that king to control the court and the kingdom. No man can be strong and fearless against the evils of society who does not realize the inherent weakness of evil and the inherent goodness of men. A Hamlet of this sort would have been a hero and a redeemer. The high ramparts of wrong, in spite of all appearances and reports to the contrary, are exceedingly vulnerable to the shafts of a disinterested righteousness. This fact of

the moral order of the world was too much for Hamlet's faith. In such a situation as his the only salvation was a keen sense of the overruling power of the Almighty, and in this he was lacking. This was the source of his weakness and his tragedy. No age nor time can conquer its weaknesses nor set its moral house in order which is wanting in this practical sense of God. It was of this consciousness that Lowell sang in words that stirred the heart of a nation to its depth:

> Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong forever on the throne,
> Yet that scaffold sways the future, and, behind the dim unknown,
> Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above his own.

CHAPTER XI

THE UNLIT LAMP AND THE UNGIRT LOIN

The Harvest of Irresolution

In "The Statue and the Bust" Browning has represented the great sin of two people as not so much a contemplated crime as the wasting and throwing away of life by reason of such continued contemplation:

> The sin I impute to each frustrate ghost
> Is the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin,
> Though the end in sight was a vice, I say.

The preëminent sin of Hamlet was the sin of "the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin." The harvest of such an irresolution is often as grievous as the harvest of sin. Sometimes in its power to involve others it becomes even more grievous. It is a truth of which we should assure ourselves that in morals and religion to will feebly is often as disastrous as not to will at all. Especially does this become true in times of change

and action. The open enemy of righteousness is limited in his power for evil by the very knowledge which men possess of his purposes. The weak-willed friend of righteousness intrusted with great issues, by reason of a false confidence imposed upon his good nature, often defeats by an inactive weakness measures that an avowed evil could not defeat. This element is too often overlooked in life. We often give ourselves the full credit of half-formed intentions that have no hold on life. We intend to be good, therefore we call ourselves good. We intend to be holy, therefore we call ourselves holy. We intend to serve God, to be unselfish, to surrender our lives to the cause of humanity, and instantly puff ourselves up with pride at our good intentions. Too often it passes in the place of righteousness. 'Tis true that only a shallow mind can be thus easily pleased with mere dreams, but there are many shallow minds among fallible human beings. The message of religious institutions has too often been directed to the pleasure and comfort of such. It is the danger whenever

religious or moral duties become either predominantly formal or emotional or intellectual. The good intentions that filled the hours of Hamlet's wakefulness did not particularly change the harvest of evil which sprang from his inaction.

The killing of the king at his prayers, in the beginning of the play, would at least have cast the moral issue before the court, and would have given the opportunity to unmask the evildoer. To live alongside of it allowed it to fester and grow till Polonius, Ophelia, Laertes, Rosencranz and Guildenstern were corrupted and drawn into the common ruin with him. What might have been a short and quickly passed issue between himself and the king lengthened out until it involved the whole court. This is the eternal result of temporizing with evil. Unless denounced it sends its poison through the whole body.

The Common Ruin of Guilty and Innocent

This formed not a small part of Hamlet's pessimism and difficulty. On every side,

and daily, it was given him to witness the fruitage of his cowardly inaction. First it was Polonius, then Rosencranz and Guildenstern, then Ophelia whose going brought the problem home with an intensified force to his sensitive soul.

This problem arising from the social dependence of individuals is not only one of the great elements of Hamlet's pessimism; it is largely accountable for that of our age. Why the innocent should be involved in the ruin of the guilty is the question which, taken in the abstract, is past finding out. There is no use to criticize Shakespeare for Ophelia's unjust doom. It is a charge not against Shakespeare, but against life. Unless we can find some solution for it, or at least can lift it into a light where solution may be seen to be possible, we shall wander as did Hamlet, lost in the maze of things as they are. In the light of this fact it will be seen that it is not enough for us to maintain an unmoral or an unreligious attitude toward society. Neither is it sufficient for us to be mildly moral or mildly religious. Such an attempt has much the

force of an effort to be partially virtuous. We cannot say what ruin we shall bring not only upon ourselves but also upon society and those whose lives we touch. The unlit lamp may create a darkness that shall blind many souls. The ungirt loin may keep back in a great host the coming of the kingdom. To let the moral questions of our age go unanswered, to put our lives but mildly or not at all into the struggle for the reign of righteousness, to allow the institutions that make for righteousness to go unsupported by us, because of anxiety for this world's gains, is to be not so far removed from those actively engaged in the spread of evil. Those whom Jesus condemned in the parable of the last judgment were not accused of active evil, but only of refraining from active good. This is the constant theme of the gospel. The outer darkness is no less dark by reason of unfulfilled good intentions. The doom is the same: "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity."

Indifference to Moral Questions Inexcusable

There can be no employment of life of sufficient importance to excuse any man from taking his moral stand. His intellectual attitudes, his prejudices, his discovery of inconsistencies in the institutions of reform—none of these form an adequate excuse for inaction. Had Hamlet struck his blow like a man instead of weighing forever, and balancing the possibilities between good and bad, he might have saved his world, his kingdom, and his soul.

To Lose the Soul—What Does It Mean?

What may it mean, then, to lose one's soul? This was a question which much concerned Hamlet. How did he work out the answer in life? He was held back from the way of duty by an extreme conscientiousness which feared to offend the higher powers. At the same time this conscientiousness erred by reason of being more formal and superficial than deep-principled. His conscience was one that was largely the product of his times. We may discover

some day that it is not sufficient to ask whether a man is conscientious. It is pertinent to ask what is the standard of his conscience? Is it bent on trifles, the weighing of mint, anise, and cummin? Is it lacking in human breadth and sympathy? Is it dominated by selfishness? Is it the reflex of a petty life and small interests? Is it born out of a low stage of civilization? Is it the product of an impartial culture? The wildest orgies, the utmost atrocities of history have been committed in the name of conscience. Persecuting flames that denied the very nature of God, refinements of cruelty have been constantly committed in all good conscience. In good conscience Paul held the garments of those who stoned the sainted Stephen. In good conscience he breathed out threatenings against the saints in Judæa and abroad. When learning what a man's conscience may or may not permit him to do, it is important to inquire what his standard of righteousness is. And in attempting to enforce our own conscience on others we should look narrowly to our own ways.

One may blind and deaden his conscience to the real moral issues of life to such extent that, seeming to pursue the way of life, he follows the way of death. And this blindness and indifference to the moral outcome of one's own life and day, however much it may be attended by a superficial conscience —this blindness and indifference is the loss of the soul. To take no side in the face of moral tasks, and to persist, is to kill the soul beyond the repair of magic of church, or priest, or doctrine of truth.

Hamlet's Salvation in the Existence of a Moral Order

Hamlet's salvation comes late. The reason for his terrible failure is, as before pointed out, lack of confidence in the moral order of the world. At the same time that he has been procrastinating and wondering what he shall do, a Divine Nemesis has been at work bringing the solution. The very excess of wickedness is making way for the coming of a better order. The unchecked king and the wicked queen are their own undoing. The wicked and unworthy

dynasty fills its cup of wrath and is blotted out of existence. This end Hamlet has had but little part in preparing. It has been more in the capacity of a "puppet of God" than by his own volition. His soul is saved from utter ruin only by the fact of his abhorrence of evil and his refusal to be content with it. In that last action at the grave of Ophelia, though in passion, the pent up impulses of the soul find release, and there breaks upon his astonished vision in the approach of Fortinbras with his army across the plain, the truth—of which to that moment he had been skeptical—that God was in his world working good out of evil and turning to good the weak vacillations of one who, though feeble in action, would not wrong the heart of truth. He bequeaths to Rosencranz the task which has been too much for him. There had been so much to do, so little done. Upon Rosencranz must fall the friendly duty of making clear to the world, out of all the surrounding confusions, the purity of Hamlet's intentions, and then, "The rest is silence."

THE FOURTH STEP

FAUST—THE STRUGGLE WITH THE PROBLEM OF REDEMPTION

CHAPTER XII

A PROBLEM OF UNPARDONABLE SIN

The Difficulty of Analysis of Goethe's Work

If we were setting out to scale one of the White Hills, we should study the map, locate the trails, put up our lunch, and a few hours of tramping would bring us to any desired point. If we were trying for the summit of McKinley in the Canadian Rockies, not only would our preparation be more complicated and toilsome, but the arrival at the goal itself would be much in question. The dramas of doubt which we have studied up to the present were of far more simple and accessible nature than is Goethe's Faust. Each of these was written to set forth some particular phase or phases of doubt. The drama before us defies such simple analysis and classification. We may in this discussion climb some single peak,

catch some vista as through a window, but we may not pretend that there are not loftier peaks that you may already have discovered, deeper and higher truths than here set down. This difficulty and diversity is due to the peculiar nature of this drama. It lacks unity because it sets forth not an idea nor a philosophy but a life. It has certain great, strong, and noble points because these were elements of Goethe's character. Its points of weakness, likewise, are those reflected from the life of its author. The drama was first projected in his mind at the age of twenty. It was not completed until he was past eighty, and within seven months of his death, when he felt the great night drawing on.

The Story

The original Faust story upon the lips of the German peasants was a story of sin from which there could be no redemption. It was a part of the popular speculation upon the unpardonable sin. It is found in other stories like Tannhäuser and Paracelsus. It was the expression of that

skepticism which arose from a sense of the condition of a sinner who had deliberately sinned against light; of whom the Scripture declared there was no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully and with tears.

This material which Goethe found in popular literature and drama he made his own, working from it the masterpiece that will evermore be linked with his name. For him the Margaret motif was but incidental to the greater work, but because of its living interest it has become predominant in the popular mind. Goethe's concern was with the salvation of Faust, but this part is read by the few.

The drama opens, like the book of Job, with a prologue in heaven in which Satan appears before the Lord, referring in a cynical way to the integrity of Faust and offering to wager that he can be seduced.

What will you bet? There's still a chance to gain
him,
If unto me full leave you give,
Gently upon my road to train him![1]

[1] Here, as elsewhere, Bayard Taylor's translation is used.

As in Job, the Lord gives Satan power to test Faust, but declares he cannot be seduced, because

> A good man through obscurest aspiration,
> Has still an instinct of the one true way.

Aspiration, or striving for something better, is the key to Goethe's treatment of the problem of life, as it is also to the salvation of Faust. Faust comes before us in the mental condition of Dante in the opening of the Divine Comedy. Midway of this mortal life he is discovered in the wilderness of disillusionment from earlier dreams. Wearied and disappointed with the results of a life of study and research, he is about to end all with poison when through his window float the strains of the cathedral bells, and the Easter anthem, "Christ is arisen!" Memories of childhood and days of simple faith rise up to divert him from the contemplated suicide. Unsatisfied with a knowledge of books, he turns to enjoy the fresh flowing life of the villagers, only to realize the unspanned gulf which his study has set between him

and them. He turns to his Bible, but opens to the first chapter of the Gospel of John and meets this mystical phrase, "In the beginning was the Word." He finds himself more puzzled than ever. His indecision is voiced in the words,

> What from the world have I to gain?
> Thou shalt abstain—renounce—refrain!
> That is the everlasting song
> That in the ears of all men rings—
> That unrelieved, our whole life long,
> Each hour, in passing, hoarsely sings.

Then it is that, finding his house empty, swept, and garnished, Satan enters in. Under his direction, Faust plunges for satisfaction into the life of the senses, making a compact to be his forever, if there shall come in human experience a moment to which he shall say, "Ah, still delay—thou art so fair." Then comes the meeting with Margaret and the terrible consequences that follow in the wake of sin. Does anyone know a more powerfully written illustration of the truth that sin bringeth forth death? Margaret's family, her mother, brother, and child die violent

deaths as the result of her sin. She at last, insane and in prison, by renouncing her sin, refusing to escape its penalty, deciding to be done with all falsehood forever, and appealing to the merciful judgment of God, is received into everlasting habitations, a sinner saved. So ends the first part of the drama.

But the road for Faust is traversed only from heaven to hell. The distance has yet all to be traversed from hell to heaven. He knows not now, and perhaps is never to know, Margaret's road of repentance. He travels out into the night, but his sin has not been one of impulse. Deliberately planned and plotted, in league with evil itself, where shall he find place for repentance?

He seeks redemption in culture and travel, but finds it not; then in the exercise of fame and power, and finds it not. In extreme age, when Care has entered at his door with blindness, while Want and Necessity linger at the threshold, he learns at last that man can be happy only as he loses life for others. In almost the last moment life begins to

turn on the rusted hinges of unselfishness. At that moment he comes to a satisfaction that has heretofore been denied him. He utters the fateful words, "Ah, still delay—thou art so fair!"

Satan claims him, but can do nothing because the thing that has come ultimately to satisfy has partaken of the eternal nature. Angels bear away the spiritual part of Faust. Margaret, the glorified penitent, appears with a great company of the heavenly host to sing his welcome home, and the drama closes with the mystic chorus—

All things transitory
  But as symbols are sent:
Earth's insufficiency
  Here grows to event:
The Indescribable,
  Here it is done:
The woman-soul leadeth us
  Upward and on!

The Problem

In taking up the study of Faust it is important to an understanding of it that we remember always that Mephistopheles

is the externalization of the subjective mind of Faust himself.[1] He has not the same character as the Satan of Job. He is the warring, rebelling spirit of man himself rather than an external personality. He is the worse nature of Faust. This Goethe has attempted to make clear in the very beginning, when Satan is introduced to Faust's room as a poodle that finally takes the form of a traveling scholar. It is a convenient way of avoiding soliloquy[2] and increasing the dramatic interest and effect. So long as Faust refused him place, so long his skepticism remained academic, but when he enters into a pact with his worse nature to follow its bidding in the pursuit of knowledge, the better Faust loses control, and in its train comes the possibility of harm to others.[3]

Intellectual Aspect of the Problem

Faust's problem was, first of all, intellectual. It arose from the vain hope of

[1] Davidson, Philosphy of Faust, p. 16.
[2] Masson, Three Devils, p. 39.
[3] Davidson, id., above, p. 22.

satisfying the soul with knowledge. Faust is hoping to discover God through the intuitions of the mind. Great impulses had been given to the doctrine of the unity of life and nature. It seemed possible on the one hand to trace to material sources the very processes and results of thought, while on the other hand was the insistent demand for a God who was resident in nature. On this basis it is not only impossible to arrive at the knowledge of God, but, as was shown by Thomas Hill Green so long ago, it is impossible to arrive at any intellectual certainty, to know that one's impressions of the external world are true.

Faust rejects the platonic view of the world when he turns from the interpretation, "In the beginning was the Word" and in its place substitutes the Aristotelian, "In the beginning was the Act." Herein lay the source of his doubt and also the incompleteness of his final answer to the problem. If we have only "In the beginning an Act," there is no further need for a directing personality behind the universe. "Already a Creator is superfluous—the

Act is all; no Eternal Reason now, no Essential Energy—a mere ebb and flow of Becoming."[1] Such a God is without personal relations to man, so that no amount of searching through the tomes of dusty books, or even through "Being's flood or action's storm," can ever draw him nearer. This was the standpoint and the source of skepticism both of Faust and of Goethe. In the youthful Faust Goethe was stating his own problem. The only adequate solution of it was the recognition of a directing Personality. This Goethe is compelled at the end to drag in by main force, after having denied it throughout his argument. Despite a great deal of fine talk about communing with a God of nature, it is true that man communes with his own spirit in her darker, deeper, and sublimer presences. In the last analysis she is meaningless altogether if she be not the purposeful manifestation of a Divine Mind. The sermon that is preached by running brooks varies with the intellectual and spiritual caliber of the audience, and will be no ser-

[1] Coupland, Spirit of Faust, p. 85.

mon at all to one of undeveloped spiritual nature. To the deep nature the physical universe speaks deep thoughts of God, to the shallow nature it speaks not at all. Each receives back glorified, and sanctified perhaps, only that which he has brought, for nature is nothing apart from man, her crown and her consummation. Man himself is a lonely, inexplicable tragedy, except as behind nature there is a directing Personality, a Mind that can fellowship with his. This was the one element which Faust failed to bring to the world of knowledge, and, later, to the world of nature. Hence there should be no surprise that in searching a supposedly aimless universe one should return on one's weary way disappointed and in despair.

The Spiritual Aspect of the Problem

There was also a deep spiritual lack which prepared the way and was the basis of Faust's pessimism. This was noticeably lacking in Goethe's own outlook on the world. He adapted the Spinozian ethics, in which the good was that which

was certainly useful and the bad was that which would certainly hinder from the attainment of good. Goethe's theory of life was particularly lacking in the sense of God as an element of moral consciousness. The same want that hid God in a universe of change, of ebb and flow, as the Unknowable, kept from him the deeper solution of the moral problem. It is unfair to call Faust a pagan, for pagans are superstitiously religious. Faust's superstitions bent the other way. Goethe sought to enlarge and deepen his own life by summoning to it everything good, beautiful, and true. He diligently sought to keep out of it all that suggested tragedy. He refused to look upon the funeral cortege of a dead friend. But only he can come to life's fullest measure of joy and of discipline who fairly faces the deepest tragedy life can bring. In this failure it is easy to discover that peculiar indifference to others which made tragic the lives of those that lived closest to Goethe. The same fountains of the heart in Faust sent forth the bitter waters of Margaret's misery.

This peculiar lack of spiritual consciousness was manifested in other respects. There is not a sufficient sense of the irrecoverable nature of sin. Faust endeavors without repentance or confession to work his way back to moral standing and self-respect. This forms what is generally recognized as an impossible problem.[1] One's inherent sense of justice and righteousness abhors such a solution. The ending of the second section shows that it did not satisfy the soul of Goethe.[2]

This, then, was the problem cast upon Faust: How can one who has lost the sense of a personal God in the universe come to that knowledge which will satisfy? How can one who is troubled with the "uncomfortable gleam of heavenly light," but who has no consciousness of Personal guidance, reach the heights of moral achievement? The question is whether one who hopes to be satisfied with *things* can successfully survive the disenchantments which lie in

[1] Royce, The Second Death, Atlantic Monthly, February, 1913, p. 242.

[2] Santayana, Three Philosophical Poets, p. 155.

all lesser satisfactions the moment they are seized. The still deeper question is this: Can one who has set out deliberately to sin against light renew himself unto repentance, though he seek it carefully and with tears? The unpardonable sin was a lively theme in mediæval days, and the mediæval answer was that renewal was impossible. Did Goethe succeed in answering the old denial, and did he point the way to peace?

CHAPTER XIII

REDEMPTION BY CONFESSION

The Irremediable Nature of Sin

The first part of Faust deals with the simple half of the problem—Faust's skepticism and sin, and the redemption of Margaret by confession and renunciation. Here Goethe has drawn with master hand the irremediable nature of sin. The path of evil once entered upon, the whole universe seems in league to enlarge and perpetuate it. This is the case even though one be unconscious of the real motives that withdraw him from the path of right. Margaret did not know the real character of her lover. She did not know the nature of the sleeping potion which she gave her mother. Yet the consequences of her sin were no less terrible upon those she loved. Her responsibility might be limited to her knowledge, but the results of her evil deed were bound by no such limitation. Her slight

variance from the way of absolute rectitude led in train the terrible consequences which in her innocence she could not foresee. Her sin began in personal vanity, and flowed from the guilelessness of her nature. But it brought consequences which were beyond her control the moment the evil thought had passed into act. Under the influence of remorse her sin has passed out of the realm of the unintentional to the darker deed.

The fact that one cannot retrieve the consequences of sin is one of the darkest problems thrust upon us. How could consequences so out of keeping with the purposeless human weakness that set them in motion come to pass in a moral world? Margaret finds that in her sin she has opened a Pandora's box that lets loose upon her all the Furies, and even Hope seems to have escaped with the rest.

The Traditional Moral Supports of Margaret

The source of Margaret's weakness is not like Faust's, intellectual. Her weakness

lies in the purely formal and external nature of her religion. Her questioning of Faust's religion follows exactly this line. She does not question his moral character, but his acceptance of the beliefs and institutions of the church. So she is easily deceived by his meaningless jargon into accepting his moral standing because what he says sounds like the talk of the good priest. Such a religion has not the strength which will enable it to withstand the fiercest assaults of temptation, nor to arise again to recovery after having fallen, because it has no root in itself. The wonder is often expressed at the moral lapse of those who have been notably faithful to the forms of the church. The truth in every such case is that the religious life has been purely formal and external. It has not, therefore, resulted in the development of character necessary to withstand the assaults of temptation. Faithfulness to external religion is always sure to be accepted as superior until its emptiness is thus displayed in the actual circumstances of life. It is a question that should give pause to every

religious leader, as to how far the formal religious exercises which are a part of his work may go in building up the character of those who attend. He must ask himself how far such exercises are merely perfunctory, pleasing to the religious imagination, but of no practical religious significance. This danger is ever present when fine sentiments are indulged for their own sake, and do not get tied up to the actual mastery of flesh and spirit, the overcoming of selfishness of act and thought, and the service of one's fellow men. Alas, how few the religious institutions that could altogether abide this test! Yet it is the one that modern Christianity is, even now, called upon to make.

The Ineffectiveness of Remorse Alone

In such a case as that of Margaret—religion being merely formal and external—it is interesting to note the forces that bring to her a sense of her sin. She does not become conscious of her sin through the unassisted processes of her own spirit, but through the attitude of the external world.

She is first made aware of the real nature of her sin by the discovery of the future attitude of the world toward her. This is brought home by the coarse suggestions of the gossip of Lisbeth at the fountain, regarding a neighbor who has gone wrong. In this she discovers the conventional attitude of society. The attitude of relatives is next disclosed to her in the brutal upbraidings of her brother, Valentine, dying by the hand of Faust. The climax of her woe is not reached, however, until she discovers what will be the attitude of the church. In the cathedral, under the awful spell of the Gregorian chanting of the "Dies irae," all hope flees from her heart, and she falls in a swoon.

So far we have only remorse, and remorse is about the best that a formal religion can produce in the sinner. Yet to lead only as far as remorse, and not to point to the way out, is to fail miserably. Balzac says: "Remorse is a weakness; it begins the fault anew. Repentance only is a force; it ends all." Remorse may be so keen as to result in the paralysis of the moral

powers. It may destroy the possibilities for better living, and keep one back from making the most of such fragments of life as may remain. God does not call us to return ever to dead battlefields to fight the phantom hosts of yesterday. There is strength only in going ahead bravely with what remains. Seen from this standpoint, there is nothing more blasting to moral progress than to brood over the mistakes of yesterday. It is not a religious act to keep them ever before the mind. Having cast off the works of darkness, we are under the moral obligation to forget as much of them as is possible.

The Necessity for Retribution

The retribution that falls upon Margaret excites our extreme pity. Yet we know how true it is to life. By retribution reference is not had altogether to the external punishment of her crime, but more to the internal, for the external retributions of sin are often escaped, and are not to be compared with those that are internal and cannot be escaped. Every sin is in a sense

irrecoverable. Every sin wounds and hurts other lives. Having once passed out into action, it can never be recalled. No true man is satisfied to have his sin go on damning the world, ruining other lives, and pay, himself, no price of atonement. He needs suffering to save his own moral self-respect. So the guilty criminal creeps back to take his sentence because he realizes it is the only way to manhood. That is a poor sort of faith which hopes by some mental turn of the hand, or some magic formula, to enjoy sin and escape only its penalty. We are giving this question deeper consideration now than we have before in many years. Our minds had been dulled to the irrevocable nature and awfulness of sin by a wooden theology of barter and trade. The grotesqueness of the mediæval thought of hell has often raised the sense of humor, while at the same time it has closed the eyes to the abiding and blasting qualities of sin, from which no sinner can escape. When we have sinned we have done an eternal injury to our own souls. And though through divine grace we rise above the fault

to better living, there will ever be something missing from the soul's eternal satisfactions.

We are sorely needing in our own day a revival of the sense of the nature of sin. Not that our judgments on conventional sins are not deep enough. Sometimes they are, sometimes they are not. Very often we pass by the really serious offenders and put upon the less offenders an added punishment. Sometimes the man who is most sinful in the sight of God retains, like Faust, his position in society, while the less guilty victim of his sin is compelled to pay to the last drop of blood. The consciousness of the inability of society to deal with the deepest sinner is coming over men with a new force, and is a potent source of despair.

The practical effect upon society has been the breaking down of respect for the institutional handling of the sinner. Whatever sinner can attract popular favor by arousing sentiments of pity can secure a pardon, and set at naught the judgment of the court. Men are thinking more deeply

than they have been able to build their institutions. They will not longer be satisfied with the raising of legal quibbles to save the wrongdoer. And this is because there is coming over the world a new sense of the blighting character of sin, and the necessity for retribution. By and by we will not be satisfied to receive an eternal pardon which has not called out upon our part the full and complete giving of ourselves to a new life of righteousness. In God's thought no such easy way of salvation has been possible at any time, and such conceptions could never have satisfied any mind that thought deeply or was filled with a sense of the real character of sin.

Goethe is morally and historically in agreement with the truth when he leaves Margaret to the punishment of the law. The way of retribution was now the only way to peace. It was paying what price might be paid as her atonement to society.

The Great Renunciation

The release of Margaret from the despair of sin is truly and wonderfully told in the

closing lines of the first part. Faust arrives at the prison to enable her to escape the approaching execution. The deeps of Margaret's heart are broken up. The voice of her lover calls her back from the insanity into which remorse and social misunderstanding have plunged her. All the attraction of love, of liberty, of life, call upon her to escape with him. But escape to what? Escape to be despised by the meanest, and most of all by herself. Their mutual sin has forever shut them out from their possible Eden. She may escape the hand of society, but she cannot escape the hell-hounds of fear. No, the only course for her (and for him, if he knew it) is to face her crime, and to expiate it. She will no longer companion with evil. She no longer desires to pass under false pretenses. She desires to know if he realizes the depth of her wickedness? She insists on his hearing the dark story of her sin. But to escape! That would mean to perpetuate her sin, not to end it. That would mean to go back on the way of repentance and undo every step thus far taken toward the goal. She

makes the great renunciation—she renounces the devil and all his works. A voice from above is heard crying, "She is saved." Margaret had attained at last to character. Out of the bitter ruins of life had been reared a refuge of the soul, founded in Eternal Righteousness. What the formal institutions of religion and society had not given her she had now attained for herself.

Margaret's way to peace is hard. Its gate is narrow, and, alas, how few that find it! In how many respects do we prefer to live over the ashes of old volcanic fires than to move out upon the plains of open confession and peace! We allow so many wrongs to go unrighted, so many misunderstandings to remain uncorrected, that much of the sweetness and light that might fill life is replaced by bitter memories and bitter thoughts. How slow is man to come to the knowledge of the truth that no wrong which he does to his finer sense of righteousness and justice goes unpunished, but takes its deadly toll out of life and character! How fatal is any trifling of the human

soul with wrong, any receiving of the rewards of injustice or of fraud! Our close-shut universe will let no soul escape from its sin, however secret, but will, if it be not disavowed, write it with indelible lines into character. How foolish for men who have no desire for character to think they can cheat or defraud the heart of the universe and the great God, hugging to themselves pet sins and follies, rejoicing in the deception of their fellows—proud in the superficial standing of society! With what glee do they hail the proposition that there is no hell, and take comfort in sin at the thought that the crude, mediæval conception is gone. No hell? God needs only to turn upon them the white light of unescapable conscience, and themselves are hell—a hell that cannot be escaped without a change in all that they have thought or known or loved. If hell be an internal thing, then, indeed, a Saviour that saves us from the love and the following of sin is the only Saviour adequate.

Over the horizon of the new day will arise a new sense of the awfulness of sin. And

there are many who have lived but lightly, and who have thought but superficially hitherto, who will see this truth which moral beings cannot escape.

We are saved not in our sins; we are saved by ending our sin; we are saved from our sins. There must be for us what there was for Margaret—the great renunciation.

CHAPTER XIV

REDEMPTION BY STRIVING

Difference Between Faust's and Margaret's Problem

When Faust withdraws himself before the high spiritual courage of Margaret, displayed now for the first time, his problem is consciously beginning where hers ends forever. With her final renunciation of every reward of sin, and her determination to expiate to the full her crime against society, Margaret rises to a height of moral grandeur which is painfully lacking in Faust. We cannot but feel this: if Faust had only been a man! If it had been only the weak and hesitating manhood of an Arthur Dimmesdale which constrained the latter to take his public stand beside Hester of the Scarlet Letter, much might have been forgiven him. But we see no such wholesome evidences of manhood in him. That is why the character of Faust is so

unpopular in the common mind. We see at no time any evidences of repentance in that long career. Faust receives all—the satisfying of every appetite, the love of a good woman, social position and power, the gratifying of his æsthetic tendencies, of his thirst for scientific attainment, and his passion for philanthropy. There is no form of this world's satisfactions which does not come knocking at his door. One grows impatient with the shallowness of heart that can receive all these things, and have no regret for the lives which his selfish happiness has blasted. There is lacking in Faust that spirit of repentance which is essential to moral depth. In this is reflected clearly the personal feeling of Goethe himself. "Repentance seemed to him something entirely negative and unproductive, a gratuitous and useless self-humiliation. Not through contrition and self-chastisement, but through discipline and self-reliance, he thought, is the way to perfection."[1]

[1] Conversations (of Goethe) with Eckermann, translated by Kuno Francke, in German Ideals of To-Day, p. 60.

Yet despite Goethe's own word we cannot feel that he continued absolutely true to his personal feeling. We have already seen that in the end he contradicts all his theories in the mystic chorus, and the salvation of Faust, because he finds himself driven to it by the requirements of dramatic effect. And what is that but saying that it was necessary to answer to the common conscience of men?

The Sin Against Light

There seems a deeper note of explanation of Faust's indifference toward repentance than even Goethe's own sentiment. The original legend was the tale of a man who by league with Satan had put himself deliberately beyond the pale of repentance. Had Goethe made the scene of Margaret's spiritual triumph the point of Faust's salvation, he would have been untrue to the Faust of popular thought. Faust was supposed to have committed the unpardonable sin, for which there was no repentance. The story was created to impress the mediæval mind with the horrible end of

apostasy. It was only one of many similar popular legends.

There was also an added reason why the same way of repentance that stood wide to Margaret was not open to Faust. It lay in the comparative natures of their sins. Margaret's was a sin of impulse, committed against what was her usually dominant better nature. It had come upon her unawares, and she had yielded without realizing what its sinfulness and its consequences might be. The sin of Faust was deliberately planned. Its consequences were foreseen. There was no concern for the effect upon others. Faust was exactly what he appears to be—a thoroughly hardened man of the world. Only in Margaret's case the fire burned a little deeper into his soul than he had expected. The undeserved love of Margaret utterly destroyed his old world of enjoyment and made the obscenities of the Walpurgis night abhorrent even to his all but godless soul. Margaret's sin had been more against herself than others. With her willingness to publish it abroad, to put it from her and to

expiate it, came release and peace. But no such sudden way was open to Faust. If he were ever saved, even at the last, he must enter in by greatest pain and difficulty. That this was true lay in himself and in the nature of his sin. What was known as the unpardonable sin depended not on some chance impulse of sudden choice. It was the deliberate forsaking of the way of righteousness against light, for temporary rewards that sin would give. It was sin with perfect understanding of its results, with definite and final abjuration of what was good and holy. This was the nature of Faust's sin, and there was no way of repentance because his heart was hardened against repentance.[1] It was steeled against any testimony of conscience. If it had not been for the shock of the Margaret episode, if it had not been that the purity, faith, and beauty of her spirit reproached him, in the midst of all the devil's satisfactions of life, he never could have found the way to redemption. This was

[1] Read Royce, Atlantic Monthly, February, 1913, "The Second Death."

the point in which Satan overreached himself and unwittingly planted the seeds of Faust's salvation. It was the woman-soul that led Faust upward and on.

"For Faust, the man, there is still one way of attainment, and that is given in the sentence of Jean Paul Richter, 'The only repentance open to thee is *a better deed*.' "[1]

Living in the Good and Beautiful Selfishly

"Spinoza defines good as that which we know with certainty to be useful to us, and evil as that of which we know with like certainty that it will hinder us from the attainment of any good."[2] Faust's failure, and Goethe's failure as well, sprang from this inadequate basis for a life philosophy. The weakness of such a philosophy lies in its selfishness. To live in the good, the true, and the beautiful is very well unless it means to separate us from the sinning, erring, and needy world. It is a comfortable business, this saving of one's

[1] Coupland, Spirit of Faust, p. 175.

[2] Walsh, Faust, The Legend and the Poem, p. 31.

own soul regardless of others. It enables us to be indifferent to social iniquities, it saves the necessity for nervous excitement in the face of great public moral crises, but, unfortunately, its salvation is only a specious one. Its comfort is only a self-deception. There are some things of far greater moral worth than peace. There are times when peace, far from being a virtue, is a sin. No man has a right to peace except through the gateway of righteousness. No man has a right to peace so long as there remains a social horror that he can help to right. Until the kingdom of God shall come in power the man of God must daily gird on his sword. The only peace he has a right to is the peace of the bivouac and the camp. It is peace in the midst of war. A religious peace which is less than that will be found a delusion and a snare. Because there has been so much of this empty peace talked of, and practiced, and praised as religion, we are in danger of forgetting quite what religion means. This is the point of resistance for most of the "isms" and "osophies" that unnerve present-day

religious endeavor. We are striving to have peace in ourselves when we ought to forget peace for self in a strife to save society from corruption. Thinking mental health in a world of sin utterly overlooks the fact that the individual is not isolated, but lives in a world of relations. These relations are as much a part of his mental and moral make-up as his subjective feeling. In fact, what man is subjectively is to be learned by his reactions upon society, and not from states of bliss, nor from his own testimony. Man has a greater task than thinking mental health in a world of sin. He cannot even think mental health unless he is doing something to rescue that world from its sin. In this Goethe has been true to the experience of life. Though Faust has all the world at his feet for purposes of self-cultivation, there remains within his heart an ache which never can be cured by any selfish satisfaction. No height of wisdom, power, or knowledge, nor even wide extended philanthropy, can make fair to him the passing moment until he comes to the point of forgetting himself, his mental

health, and his personal satisfaction, in a real self-sacrifice. In the present day there are no more useless lives to be found anywhere than those which retire within themselves to enjoy the bliss of a subjective experience or than those that for the sake of mental health shut out from their vision the tormented and suffering world. Such lives have of all the least right to the term religious. As in Christ's day, the publicans and sinners enter in before them. Of a truth "He that seeketh to save his life shall lose it."

The Wilderness of Strife

Was it impossible for one who had started out to find his satisfactions in the world of time and sense to arrive at the goal by any other way than the wilderness of striving (*streben*)? Probably not to anyone so completely given over to the folly of doubt as was Faust. Back of all his skepticism of any good in the world, of any satisfaction, lay the deeper skepticism which was willing to sell his soul, if in any of these things he could be satisfied. So we see him run the

whole gamut of what the world can give, and at every point he is turned back on self wearied and disappointed. The wilderness would have been unnecessary if there had been less willingness to be led by the devil. If he had not given himself into the slavery of his lower impulses, he might not only have been saved for a future life, but he might have been saved for the life that now is. The means and the methods that he used in statecraft, culture, and philanthropy were dictated by this lower self, that is, the devil. The successes he gained were thus robbed of that moral significance which alone could have made them of worth and satisfaction to a moral being. Striving, to produce satisfactory results, must have not a selfish but an unselfish and moral end. Because this was lacking the very attainment brought disillusionment. This fact lends itself to the pessimism of the present which is so common among those that have attained distinction in the world. The search for wealth, for fame, or honor, has been undertaken at the behest of the lower impulses. It has been a purely selfish

search. The moment of attainment has also been the moment of disillusionment, because the highest joy that is given in this world is the joy which comes of unselfishness. He who hopes to tread any path of selfishness to power and satisfaction wanders in a "wilderness and a solitary way," far from the springs of joy. To have one's enemy in one's hand!—yes, for a moment it gives a fleeting satisfaction, but there is always our soul to reckon with. Before we have even formulated that joy to ourselves it is crying out, "Unworthy! Unworthy!"

"The Hunter is Home from the Hill"

Up to the very close Mephistopheles has tried to satisfy Faust with *things*, and Faust, driven from one to another, has hoped for satisfaction thus. But the truth at last breaks upon him that peace can come only in unselfish service. He finds that satisfaction for man cannot come in achievement of ends but in struggle for highest ends. In his determination to drain the marsh and make the home for a free people he

does not hope to endow them with institutions of freedom that will last forever. Freedom must be fought for by every generation. Man's satisfaction is in fighting out his own problem. He finds his own way to peace. The task upon which humanity is set is too great to be compassed by any one century or age, but in the ceaseless struggle to be free, to be just, to be right, man finds his satisfaction and his peace.

> In marching onwards, bliss and torment find,
> Though, every moment, with unsated mind.

It is the truth which Tennyson set forth so vividly in "Wages":

> Glory of warrior, glory of orator, glory of song,
> Paid with a voice flying by to be lost on an endless sea—
> Glory of Virtue, to fight, to struggle, to right the wrong—
> . . . . . .
> Give her the glory of going on, and still to be.
> . . . . . .
> She desires no isles of the blest, no quiet seats of the just,
> To rest in a golden grove, or to bask in a summer sky:
> Give her the wages of going on, and not to die.

The skepticism and world-weariness of the young Faust is thus answered. The perfect knowledge, the perfect achievement, the perfect solution is not for him. Knowledge, nature, industry, government, culture—in none of these can he hope to speak or to know the final word. All such hoped-for resting places are merely as dreams of the night.

To know that life, flying amid the struggle, is giving itself to help on the better day—this is to be his satisfaction and his salvation.

This perhaps was the deepest truth that Goethe uttered for our modern age. It is a truth of which we are being daily made more conscious. We are no longer in love with closed systems. The old demand for absolute and finished truth is now being put in the background. Experience, through history, has shown too many systems, supposed quite generally to be the final word and forced on reluctant minds with fire and sword, finally falling of their own weight because they had not the power of truth. That the truth of to-day will

be adequate for the growing life and moral outlook of to-morrow is the most impossible of dreams, for life can only be held of life. We cannot constrain the future with our theological opinion nor even with our interpretation of the Christ. Because he is living he can never lose his hold upon the centuries. It is the task, the duty, and the privilege of to-morrow to interpret him in its own way. To have helped to realize him in the world, to have helped in the reign of his eternal kingdom—that should be enough for any man, without attempting to stretch his human understandings to the point of infallibility for all time. "Man finds his end only in the active conquest of freedom, a task which from its very nature cannot be completed in time."[1]

[1] Davidson, Philosophy of Faust, p. 143.

CHAPTER XV

DID GOETHE SOLVE THE PROBLEM?

The Attempt to Avoid a Dualistic World

Did Goethe solve the problem upon which he set himself? Did Faust find salvation along the lines that Goethe intended, or was that salvation, in the last analysis, a contradiction of all that had gone before? I believe that, considered from the standpoint of his own philosophy, we must admit he has failed. The contradictory redemption which he has assumed for Faust does not satisfy the modern mind.

In the first place, Goethe set out to avoid the prevalent dualism which violently divided the universe in halves—the good and the evil, Creator against creation—and which was the fundamental basis of mediævalism. He ended by appealing for Faust's salvation to that very theology

which in the beginning he repudiated.[1] In the last act of the drama that world of mediæval thought which has been so laboriously destroyed is invoked with its magic to save a Faust who has not yet, as the modern conscience sees it, done the things meet for repentance and salvation. In the beginning Mephistopheles is the subjective spirit of denial to be found in Faust. In the world he is the darkness which makes us conscious of the light, but a part of the universe, existing with divine sanction and permission. In the end he is a mediæval devil, and no part of Faust, and no necessary part of the universe. The dualistic world is set up again and Faust is saved from the wreck as by fire. Goethe set out with an idea of the unity of creation—that evil is only the shadow of good, bringing good in spite of itself, that God is everywhere in this creation, working here and there, a Force, an Act, a Deed, but never a thinking Personality. The only goal of such a philosophical progress is pantheism. But

[1] For discussion of this point see Davidson, Philosophy of Faust, chapter on "The Redemption of Faust."

Goethe had been driven by the very logic of events to give up this position. Along the horizon of life there may be sufficient promise of salvation in all that Faust sets out to achieve, but when the night approaches and the half-gathered harvest of his good and evil is around him, it is discovered to be so much of it tares instead of grain that his heart is left unsatisfied. This is the end of every moralist. There is one thing more tragic even than the sad hour when the scholar in world-weariness turns from the stultified forms of his study to seek the highest in existence. That is when at the last, rich beyond the reach of Want, Debt, or Necessity, he cannot bar out Care, ugliest of all, and Death, most menacing of all. All the triumphs of his life—love, statesmanship, culture, war, and commerce—have turned to dust and ashes, and the last act of his life is only measurably better than that which has gone before. In that last moment he arrives at the apprehension of the truth—that the reason all he has done has given him no satisfaction is because it has all been selfishly done.

For the first time in his self-centered existence he contemplates a work that will make others happy. In its contemplation he bids the passing moment stay—and expires. But there is here only the beginning, not the end of salvation. Another world is required to work it out.

This discloses the fatal dualism of Goethe's thought. He fell into the very error from which it was his purpose to escape. He had not grasped the thought of the eternity of this present world, or, we might better say, the eternal character of present action. If there is a God present anywhere in the universe, he must be a spiritual God with whom man can commune and coöperate only through his own spiritual nature. From this God of spirit nature too must find her reason and her interpretation. She cannot be something of herself and apart from her Creator. She possesses no meaning apart from his spiritual ends. She is understood of man only because of man's spiritual nature, which is in kinship with God's. Starting out to overcome that hopeless dualism between

good and evil which sunders the world of God from the world of the devil, which puts an endless conflict in the heart of nature where God can never be eventually triumphant, Goethe, by the inadequateness of pantheistic philosophy, falls back into the fatal error from which he strove to emerge.

Too Short to Span the Distance from Hell to Heaven

If the weakness of this attempt to solve the mystery of life were philosophical alone, the offense would not be so serious. But the greatest failure lies in the practical bearing on life. Though Goethe did not so intend it, the practical import of the drama is the darkest pessimism. This springs from the unsocial character of Goethe's idea, which is itself more or less the product of an unsocial age. The whole thought of Goethe and of Faust respecting a philosophy of life was the culture of the individual regardless of what surroundings might be. Tennyson has aptly summed up the dangers from intellectual pride in his reference to Goethe in "The Palace of Art":

"O godlike isolation which art mine,
I can but count thee perfect gain,
What time I watch the darkening droves of swine
That range on yonder plain.

"In filthy sloughs they roll a prurient skin,
They graze and wallow, breed and sleep;
And oft some brainless devil enters in,
And drives them to the deep.

"I take possession of man's mind and deed.
I care not what the sects may brawl.
I sit as God holding no form of creed,
And contemplating all."

But for this essentially selfish attitude of the soul there come painful misgivings in this world of pressing human relations:

Full oft the riddle of the painful earth
Flash'd thro' her as she sat alone,
Yet not the less held she her solemn mirth,
And intellectual throne.

. . . . . .

When she would think, where'er she turned her sight
The airy hand confusion wrought,
Wrote, "Mene, mene," and divided quite
The kingdom of her thought.

. . . . . .

In the dark places of her palace stood
Uncertain shapes; . . .

There lay behind Faust certain unpurged sins which no amount of action could of itself have purged. What he needed was not a Pater Seraphicus to purge his sins. He needed to do some spiritual house-cleaning himself. He needed a new heart, a new conscience,[1] a new and living sense of social responsibility—in other words, he needed a real consciousness of the dark and blasting sins that lay behind him and such a forsaking of the devil and his works *in this life* that he would have been a new creature. There is no heavenly dram or potion that could save the Faust who betrayed Margaret. The Faust who is borne aloft must be a new Faust who has deliberately set behind him, in all humility, every way of sin.

Goethe has characterized his work as "a journey from heaven to hell and back again to heaven," but the means he takes to span the backward gulf are not sufficient. His difficulty is one that is sure to attend a purely personal ideal of salvation. The

[1] Royce, "The Second Death," Atlantic Monthly, February, 1913, p. 242.

salvation of Faust was not the most important thing in the world. From God's standpoint there were also Margaret and her mother and Valentine. Faust's salvation must lie in the large in taking God's standpoint. No human being is justified in taking the position that *his* individual salvation is the all-important matter in the divine order. A true perspective on this fact of life would make us less flippant and more reverential in our treatment of God, less selfish in our prayers, and more concerned over our neighbor's welfare. I ought to be honest enough with myself to realize that God is more anxious over the salvation of my neighborhood, with its some thousands of souls, by some thousands of times, than he is over my individual salvation. If, then, in my intense anxiety, not for godlike character, but to escape a future prepared for the devil and his angels, I shut my eyes to God's intenser desire, where do I find that common standpoint with God which would justify my salvation? Faust was more concerned with a personal salvation than he was with a character.

The only thing eternal in us is a godlike character. That is the only thing we need to struggle and strive for. If we do not get at least the rudiments of that in our earthly experience, it is futile for us to expect it to come to us somewhere else. It is a vain and empty satisfaction to imagine the battle fought and won on ethereal battlefields when it has not even been sensed here. He who deliberately flings away the culture of character for a salvation afforded by the magic of mental assent to doctrine, or the power of the church, or the absolution of a priest, has not yet learned what religion is. He has sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. What Faust needed was not philanthropy, but character.

The "Streben" Philosophy of Modern Life

The bearing of Goethe's philosophy of "salvation by striving" upon modern life becomes quickly evident. Goethe stood at the opening of the industrial age, and therein lay for him a great hope. To a large degree

our age has made his philosophy its own. "Faust is the gospel of human salvation through human activity."[1] Surely, the philanthropic Faust, dying with a load of sins on his head, but blessed in the thought of topping off life with one deed devoid of selfish greed, and winning thereby immortality, lies very close to a common modern conception. Our modern industrial system, like a veritable Mephistopheles, has driven us into some very questionable ethics. We certainly need, if we can, to purge ourselves of sin. In our great steel plants men work under conditions that shorten life and render them little less than brutish. In the depths of the earth men toil for us, never looking at the sun, with never a thought from us of mercy or commiseration. Amid the awful ravages of the white plague overwearied fingers sew our "cheap clothes and nasty," of which Mr. Kingsley spoke so feelingly so long, so long ago. In the stores we, searching for the cheapest, are served by hands that

[1] Herman Grimm, quoted by W. L. Gage, Salvation of Faust.

once were pure, and would be now only that soul and body must be kept together, and the hard-hearted employer is not willing to pay wages sufficient without the assistance that impurity gives. The hands of lisping children of the tenements assist the gratification of our demand for luxuries, meantime laying the foundation for future ill health and crime and ignorance. We can "help lift their condition" with parks, schools, playgrounds, the gift of libraries, and foundations, but after we have done all this, who will save *our* souls? So long as we consent to profit by these evils where is our boasted character, and what can God do for us? The weakness of human salvation by human activity is that too often the heart of things is left out. Your attention is called to the fact that while Faust takes pleasure in the good his industrial establishment does by providing for so many mouths, he himself lives in a palace and is the dictator of it all. The rest are like slaves with no power of self-government. His philanthropy lacked the heart of religion because it lacked real sacrifice.

He gave out of undiminished comfort as if it were his own and not God's treasure. He did not move out of the palace to take his place alongside of other men in the struggle. Therefore his philanthropy was devoid of religion and could not save his soul. His bridge reached from a simpler to a more complex and somewhat mitigated hell, but it was devoid of that element which alone could have redeemed Faust's world and Faust himself, and the age in which we live.

The Unappreciated Cross

"The highest moment attained by man is the hour of intensest pain, and a crown of thorns is the meed for the divinest brow."[1] This is the fundamental truth which Goethe failed to grasp and which alone would have been sufficient to bridge the gap from hell to heaven. Davidson has called attention to the sad want of moral appreciation in sending Faust out from the prison scene with Margaret to the

[1] Coupland, Spirit of Faust, p. 172.

refuge of a calm contemplation of nature—"to think that the pangs of remorse can be cured by a poultice of grass, moss, and starlight."[1] This was Goethe's failing, and it is too much ours. There is less peace to be had in this modern life by contemplation of nature and more peace of the sort that endureth ever by the taking up of a real cross of Christ. Unless the individual can rise to that universality which love gives in binding him to his fellow men, he has not learned the way to life. Faust could have been truly saved in character, and that means in reality, only as the interests of self had fallen before an all-giving sacrifice for others. How strange that his eyes were closed to the deepest fact of human life. It was a part of his youthful pessimism to note

> The few who therefore something really learned,
> Unwisely frank, with hearts that spurned concealing
> And to the mob laid bare each thought and feeling
> Have evermore been crucified and burned.

[1] Davidson, Philosophy of Faust, p. 73.

Why did not the older Faust discover the secret? He looked upon common men as "the mob," not from a heart of love.

And some day the world will read the secret of Faust's mystery no longer darkly, but plainly, and some day humanity will discover what Faust never discovered—that the way to joy, to power, and to salvation is the way of the now unappreciated cross.

THE FIFTH STEP

BRAND—THE STRUGGLE ARISING FROM THE FAILURE OF SPIRITUAL IDEALS

CHAPTER XVI

"ALL OR NOTHING"

Introduction

THE IRON CONSCIENCE

In Ibsen's Brand we have, worked out to its practical conclusion, a problem which was much more the problem of a previous generation than of our own. Brand is the impersonation of the iron conscience. He had the highest scorn of all measures of compromise. He seeks absolute obedience to his conception of the will of God, but with an absence of the tempering quality of mercy. There still lingers, here and there, a conscience of this kind, though it is not, nor ever has been, a popular type. More pertinent to the shallow philosophy of self-culture which characterizes our own age is Ibsen's Peer Gynt, but its consideration would bear us beyond the limits of

this volume. Bernard Shaw and others have been glad to discover in Brand a refutation and denial of the Christian faith, but such a view is singularly lacking in insight, and results from the blinding of the judgment by the personal wish. It is easy to find in any vital work just what one is looking for. Brand's religion is only partly Christian. It is just because of that fatal lack of the spirit which would make him truly Christian that he fails. This, we must believe, it was Ibsen's purpose to show. If anything is refuted, it is the Judaic form of religion which Paul and the other apostles had also declared partial and imperfect. One cannot of himself fulfill, even by the fullest sacrifice, his complete and absolute obligation to God. In the end he must be saved by grace, and he must save others by his grace. This must be ever the story of any adequate salvation.

The Story

Young Brand, having finished his studies for the ministry, is endeavoring to discover the place and the substance of his mission.

He views with supercilious scorn the make-shift, easy-going character of the religious ideals which rule the men and women around him. He cries,

> "Be what you are with all your heart,
> And not by pieces and in part."

He scorns the half-hearted spirit of his countrymen:

> "His faults, his merits, fragments all,
> Partial in good, partial in ill,
> Partial in great things and in small;
> But here's the grief—that, worst or best,
> Each fragment of him wrecks the rest."[1]

Importuned by a father to minister to his dying daughter, Brand sets out with father and son across the snowfields. The fogs roll in to obscure the way, and render the trip across the mountains exceedingly hazardous. Fearing the deadly avalanche, the father turns back and tries to dissuade him. Brand, disgusted, pushes on, leaving his companions behind, and arrives in time to minister to the dying girl. The sun soon lifts the fog, and he discovers Einar,

[1] Brand, translation by Herford, Act I, p. 23.

an æsthetic painter, and Agnes, his sweetheart, sporting along the way from their betrothal feast. They feel that life in its deepest reality is only a thing of laughter, joy, and song, and are unmindful of the precipice along the edge of which they play. From this danger Brand saves them by a warning cry. Later he meets the mad girl, Gerd, in wild abandon endangering everybody as she throws stones at a falcon. She tells him to forsake the conventional ideals of religion for the ice-church in the mountains, where the cataracts sing the mass. In these three Brand finds disclosed the three types of weakness which it is his mission to fight. The father who turned back for fear of the avalanche is "faint-heart," Einar and Agnes, with their superficial views of life, represent the type which he calls "light-heart," while Gerd, with her wild ways fighting against all restriction of convention, is "wild-heart."

> Light-heart who, crown'd with leafage gay,
> Loves by the dizziest verge to play,
> Faint-heart, who marches slack and slow,
> Because old Wont will have it so;

Wild-heart, who, borne on lawless wings,
Sees fairness in the foulest things,
War front and rear, war high and low,
With this fell triple-banded foe!
I see my Call![1]

It is thus that Brand dedicates himself to the "all or nothing" principle of life. Henceforward farewell to all half-hearted measures and that religion which is intent only on self-salvation:

A little pious in the pew,
A little grave—his father's way—
Over the cup a little gay—
It was his father's fashion too!

He soon has opportunity to put his resolve into action. As he approaches his native village he finds the Mayor's clerk distributing food to the starving in completely professional charity. Where one has died it is not without its happy side, because there is one less to feed. Should one come from outside the parish, no human want would argue for his relief because "beyond our bounds."

I do my duty with precision—
But always in my own Division.

[1] Herford's Brand, Act I, p. 36.

Into the midst of this scene breaks a woman who appeals for some one to cross the fjord to her dying husband, who, in a fit of madness caused by the suffering of his starving children, has slain one of them. The only bridge was swept away as the woman crossed. Upon the fjord rages a tempest in which it seems no boat could live. No one will volunteer to go with Brand to hold the sail. All are held back from the heroic by consideration for their future, their families, or some convenient excuse. Agnes demands that her lover Einar go, to prove his manhood, but Einar is like the others, and by his refusal puts a great gulf between them. At last, as the boat is pushed off, Agnes leaps in. The heroism of Brand decides the people to call him for their priest. He is at first unwilling, having in view larger fields than would be afforded by the narrow valley of his native place. The clearer-sighted, because loving, Agnes persuades him that here is as great possibility as anywhere, and he remains.

His mother, a woman of the world and a miser, forms the first great test of his new

philosophy of life. Thoroughly sordid and low in life, she had hoped to save her soul by educating her son for the ministry. When he declares that she shall not be saved except by giving to the poor all her possessions, she finds it impossible to break the bondage of long years of sin, and dies unconfessed, crying out that God will be more lenient than her hard-hearted son.

We next see Brand and Agnes married and living with their little boy in the sunless valley where their work demands their presence. The child sickens, and the only hope of saving his life is to remove him to a gentler climate. This Brand is in the act of doing when he is reminded by the people and by Gerd, who represents now his own conscience, that it is inconsistent with the theory he has been preaching, that God demands "all or nothing."

He remains and the child dies. But the heaviest stroke is yet to come. The heart of Agnes is bound up in her child. She puts the Christmas candle in the window where it may shine across the grave. According to Brand's principle, this shows a

heart rebellious against the divine providence and he commands that the candle be removed. The last refuge of the woman's heart is the little garments of the dead boy. As soon as this new idolatry is discovered it must be quenched. Here occur some of the most moving lines of literature. Brand commands that the garments be given the illegitimate son of a hag of the ditch in all her foulness and filth. A little cap concealed in the bosom of Agnes's dress is the last and absolute demand. As this is yielded there comes in her heart the peace of complete surrender, but, alas! also a breaking heart. She has been called upon for the sacrifice which passes the bounds of human strength. She dies warning Brand that one cannot look on the face of Jehovah and live.

Brand has long since felt dissatisfied with his church. He has been led to feel that conducted on a grander scale it will be more satisfying. He builds a cathedral with the ill-gotten hoardings of his mother, but on the day of its dedication, he sees how it is all a lie and instead of unlocking

it to the people he throws the keys in the river and exhorts the people to follow him far off, far up, to a new church unconventional but perfect in the mountains. This the people, admiring his courage and sincerity, at first do, but soon there are the common difficulties, hunger, the means of life; these are questions which must be met. The schools of fish, returning, glisten in the fjord. They stone their leader and return to the normal and too common life. Brand fares alone far up the mountain to discover in the end that his ideal church was only an ice-church. Here too conscience is present in the form of Gerd, whose pistol shot brings down the avalanche that swallows him up, while a voice is heard above the ruck exclaiming, "I am the God of love." This legend indicates alike the source of Brand's failure and discloses the only hope of his salvation. Both standpoints are true and both are allowable.

Brand's Character Analyzed

We shall not understand Brand's character without taking into account the circum-

stances of his birth. In Brand's mother there is a will quite as full of iron as in the son. Only instead of going in the direction of self-surrender its whole thought is self-profit. In the mother's case it is the iron will bent on its own satisfaction, expecting in the end to bend God to its own uses. To this end love and every dear treasure of life are sacrificed. On the other hand, Brand represents the opposite condition. With him every love and every treasure of the passing hour is sacrificed to what is deemed to be the will of God, in the pursuit of a supposed perfection. In the midst of this Brand is pursued by a lawless imagination in the form of Gerd, luring him now from all conventional forms, now becoming a pursuing conscience to keep him from every compromise. Ibsen here read truly the human heart. It is not often the purest-minded priest that submits himself to the deepest flagellations. The very lawlessness of Brand's imagination became in moments that conscience returned to dominate, the deepest scourge of his soul. We do not know how often behind the deepest

sacrifices of modern life there lie the shadows of deeper sins of which by a sort of flagellation the soul hopes to rid itself. Brand's birth, his early memories, his bringing up, all help to emphasize the completeness of his revolt from the dead-level plane of conventional religious ideals in an endeavor to save his own soul and to make amends for his mother's wickedness. In his conception of the bearing of heredity on life Ibsen is close kin with Æschylus and Euripides.

This forms the tragic face of Brand's problem. How to win a holiness that shall undo the deeds of his mother; how out of all that foul start to win a perfection which God himself must recognize, which man must recognize also, and which must change the face of the earth—that was his problem.

Just here we witness the necessity for the "all or nothing" principle of Brand. As he saw it, this complete giving of himself was necessary for one who from such foulness would win his way to heaven. The sense of his own unworthiness, the fear of participating in the self-seeking of a mother

who turned holiest things to self-gratification, made him what he was. He feared to save his boy, lest he lose his own soul. He feared to temporize with Agnes's grief, lest his own heart should give way to human weakness. His uncompromising attitude with his mother ruthlessly crushed his lively affection, but he refused her the comfort of religion that by a full and complete sacrifice she might save her soul. Such a thoroughgoing individual as Brand is inconvenient to have about. He is ever bringing religion into contrast with tasks and duties that seem to be necessary to life. He presents ideals which, if observed to the letter, make life itself impossible. The sheriff found how uncomfortable it was for the existing order to have Brand about and so asked him to please move on to another neighborhood.

Religious fanatics spring out of the soil of corruption that produced Brand, from the days of Loyola to those of John B. Gough. It is rare for religious intensity to spring from surroundings of culture and from normal habits of life and thought.

The life that has a keen sense of being digged from a pit is the life that is prepared to go upon a crusade for righteousness. Of this kind and temper the world is ever in need to waken it from its conscienceless lethargies and to set it upon the heroic.

The Successive Tests of Brand's Motto of Life

The first test of Brand's absolute-perfection philosophy came through his mother, and here was registered his first failure. He felt it necessary for her salvation that she should strip herself to nakedness and rags in order to kill the sin of covetousness. However true we may consider Brand's attitude in the matter, the fact remains that his mother died unchurched and unsaved. His "all or nothing" doctrine, necessary or unnecessary, was not sufficient to snatch her life from the impending ruin. Who shall say but that a little more of filial love, a little more of pitying consideration for the remnants of good, might have led her along the way and might have made possible for her the great renunciation?

The next test came when the bearing of his religious program on the lives of the innocent and the earnest is seen. We can say, perhaps, that the wicked mother simply went her own way, for which her son was not responsible. We cannot say this of Brand's little boy, nor of Agnes his wife. A sense of religious duty, because it is too narrow in its outlook, causes the death of the child. The Brand that refused to take the child to a place of health has the same vein of tin possessed by the Brand who was so inexorable with his mother. He will not leave the valley to save the child's life because he is torn between love and duty. But the ruling motive here is close to spiritual pride. He fears what the people will say about his consistency. The voice of conscience in the person of Gerd does not free itself from its baser nature. Because Brand does not distinguish this from the voice of God he fails in the second great test. The test in the case of Agnes is likewise a failure. All through his trials Brand has been severe upon himself, and upon others he has been harder than God.

In hardness he broke the bruised reed and quenched the smoking flax of Agnes's life. So it was with the other tests. Of course a church built by the rewards his mother had won from sin could never be a fit place in which to worship a God of "no compromise." The tainted dollar would ever remain tainted and accursed, to whatever use it be put. The same philosophy of religion prevented the people from the normal occupations of life and ultimately led to Brand's rejection. When he follows his ideal to its absolute end he arrives at last in an ice-church of which he is the sole member with only Gerd, his accusing conscience, for an audience. The forces that have made all previous tests a failure now operate upon his own soul. By iron will and conscience alone shall no man be saved.

"All or Nothing" in Modern Life

The problem here set forth is the conscious possession of every earnest social and religious worker of the day. How to bring civic, mental, moral, and religious

salvation to an indifferent people is the heart-breaking problem which faced Brand and which faces very many of us. We feel the exact truth of Ibsen's withering scorn upon the *laissez faire* attitude and shallow self-contents of his age. It is the picture also of our own half-hearted age. Were there not here and there a Brand to hurl himself in defiance against its half-truths and whole lies, against its half-formed impulses of good, its half-realized measures of reform, its half-lived religion, humanity would rot. But when such Brands have thrown themselves away, giving life itself a protest, their voice has been like the voice of one crying in the wilderness. The light has shined only in an uncomprehending darkness. The problem comes home to us in most vivid way. Where can we find the solution? The march of the masses toward the better land is so slow. The few earnest leaders of reform would have long since entered into the promised land, but the lagging rear guard of the unseeing and unbelieving holds back their steps, preventing even them from entering in. From some

far mountaintop they see the vision of what might have been, of what shall be, but in their loneliness there they lay them down to die. Long, long afterward the rear guard catches up in time to build them a tomb. That this should be the fate of the world's earnest souls is the ever-abiding tragedy of our humanity. Brand and Prometheus are proclaimed brothers across the confused and noisy ages.

Yet there is something to be said for the slow rank and file. They represent the practical side of life. The fiery heroism of Phillips and of Garrison is matched by the more practical heroism of a patient and waiting Lincoln. The vanguard of reform must proclaim abstract truths, and by training men's eyes upon the absolute and perfect, make them realize what, in the end, may be less absolute, but better, because it fits humanity. The idealist too often forgets that good does not really exist until it has left the clouds of abstract principles and has taken form in life.

Most often to the idealist the picture seems spoiled when it leaves the abstract

and is seen realized in the midst of human weakness and error. Yet the imperfect good seems to be of very great value to God. It is God's way of bringing the perfect day.

The reformer blazes the way of "no compromise with evil," proclaiming from every housetop his "all or nothing" philosophy. He has his mission and his place, but blessed to humanity are those who follow behind, patient to achieve what to-day is possible, and working for the better day.

He who refuses the least because he cannot have all is equal in sin with him that refuses all.

CHAPTER XVII

"WHERE LOVE IS, GOD IS"

Failure from an Overemphasized Individualism

Let us sum up the sources of failure in Brand's life and ascertain, if we can, the guideposts to a solution of his problem.

The failure of Brand's religious ideals sprang, first of all, from his failure to realize truly the world of human relations. The first commandment, to love God with all the heart, is accompanied by a second which requires one to evidence that love by loving his neighbor as himself. Brand forgot that there was a second commandment. Yet the second commandment is the practical side of religion without which the first is nothing. It is a terrible thing to have a perfectionist of this kind in the

family, as Brand's mother, child, and wife too dearly learned. To love God with all the heart was Brand's abstract ideal. It had no earthly meaning at all until it began to be evidenced in a world of human relations. The best evidence of his love for God would have been shown by a deeper and farther reaching sympathy for his gross and sinful mother. Little Alf, too, had his right to life and self-expression, which bulked as truly and as largely in the thought of God as any fancied duty of Brand toward any community. Brand was living for a world which was all too narrow. There was a future and a distance as well as a passing moment. That was a diabolical religious fatalism that could calmly look on Alf's death as the expiation of his grandmother's sin, or even to be acquiesced in as discipline for Brand and Agnes. Too often, in such lives as Brand's, Satan appears as an angel of light. His supreme duty at that moment was toward the little boy, for whom God had made him responsible. That was an arrogant egotism in Brand which presumed the neighbor-

hood would go to the bad if he left it. God has many means of bringing and preserving his kingdom. He is never shut up to a single instrument. "Remember," said a shortsighted friend to a young theological student, "while you are studying Hebrew souls are dying." Such narrowness assumes that God has limited means of carrying on his work, and that he cannot wait for men to prepare themselves. All such theories fail because they consider the subject apart from the wider and greater world. There is no ideal so great that it should turn us from the real duty of the hour. But some one says, "Did not Christ say, 'Let the dead bury their dead'?" Yes, but a careful reading will disclose that these were excuses by which men were attempting to escape participation in the closing ordeal and passion of Jesus's life. These were trivial duties which were being put forward as justification for neglecting the paramount duty.

Then there was Agnes. Brand never could have made the demands on her which he did if he had rightly respected her per-

sonality. A mother's love is one of the God-given things that by its tender sentiment and beauty, a full-blown flower of life, keeps humanity from corrupting. It is insufficient to say that Brand did not recognize it because it had never appeared in his mother's life. That was doubtless true. That was a part of his tragedy. Failure to appreciate Agnes's love was, nevertheless, his sin. That is one of the most exquisite pictures of modern literature—Agnes at the window on Christmas Eve. We may be sure God has no quarrel with such a love as that, though Brand was sure he did.

There used to be a theory that to love wife, husband, child, or friend sacrificially was the idolatrous evidence of an absence of love for God. I do not know who broached this hoary heresy. It is in unity with the worst elements of paganism. To say God took your child because you loved him too much is of a piece with saying that it is your duty to offer your child to Moloch or to cast him to the sacred alligator because you love him. God is never jealous of your

human love. What a travesty is such a thought upon Jesus's teaching that love for man is the evidence of love for God! When Brand snuffed out the candle of Agnes's longing for her boy, he committed murder in the name of God.

It is no wonder that such a dreamer was unable, with all his ideals, to lead his people to the light. He could not understand people because by his very upbringing he was out of sympathy with men and women. He laid down impossible demands because his program, while it was possible to a man living alone in a vast world, was impossible to men living in a world of relations. This is the real problem at the heart of many of the vagaries and excrescences of Christianity. Monasticism, asceticism, celibacy—these are its children. People are so slow to realize that a man can be a full-rounded Christian only in a world of normal human relations. Such a Christian a man cannot be in a monastery, in a retreat, or in a religious shell of any kind. He rises or he falls with his attitude toward a world of

relations. If he cannot there religiously adjust himself, he has religiously failed. At the heart of all such systems is an insufferable egotism. It assumes that our individual salvation is the principal thing in all the universe. In truth, we are not worth saving until we can forget our morbidly selfish desire to be saved, in an altruistic desire to be saviors. Only saviors can be saved, if we but had the sense to know it.

When Brand did to the death that flower of Agnes's heart, her memory of her boy, he did away with the most priceless spiritual treasure of his home and heart.

Failure from a False View of Sacrifice

Brand's failure sprang also from his false notion of sacrifice. He valued sacrifice, and supposed God valued it, for its own sake. A sacrifice can never be demanded as a sort of spiritual gymnastic. Yet this was the type of sacrifice that Brand demanded of Agnes. It was called out to meet a merely theoretical exigency. Her

fondling of the child's garments was assumed as a revolt against the divine will in his death. Brand did not see that he was far more accountable than God for the lad's dying. It was not a matter of refusing the hag with the foul child at the door. Other clothing would have kept him equally warm. The demand was for the killing of the finest instincts of her mother heart. It was not sacrifice with a meaning. It was sacrifice for a theory. Neither Brand nor God himself would have had a right to require it. There is a domain of the human heart, a sanctuary of the individuality, which God considers too precious to violate, where only men dare tread with sacrilegious feet. Into this holy place the Christ will enter only upon man's invitation. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." Jesus was ever a respecter of personality. Some surrenders can be made only at the cost of spiritual idiocy, because the soul has a right to itself. Therefore any sacrifice of this self which has not some higher purpose is a crime against the individual. Even the cross could not have been incum-

bent upon Jesus except for a great practical purpose. That practical purpose was no theoretical propitiation of wills either—it was a practical redemption of men, or else it was heaven's supreme injustice.

God never calls men to sacrifice for the sake of a theory nor for the sake of sacrifice. True sacrifice is deep with practical purpose. It has for its object the welfare not of the individual, but of his fellows. Had this truth been better understood, the horror of asceticism would never have darkened the world. My starved, belabored, and failing body, if it be starved and belabored for my own soul's good, hides a more starved and more belabored soul. There is soul health for me only when it is starved and belabored to some true purpose, the help and betterment of my fellow men. I may not seek sacrifice for my soul's good, but if it come as the result of serving and redeeming my fellows, I am not to turn from it. To avoid it then is to lose my soul.

And Mercy too Is a Virtue

Ibsen points out a third source of Brand's failure by the lips of the doctor who witnesses the household tragedy. He says to Brand,

> . . . "Your Love-account is still
> A virgin chapter, blank and bare."

This was the deepest source of failure. We cannot help realizing how predisposed to this sin Brand would be by hereditary influence and training. His childhood had been loveless. His early home had been loveless, just as his mother's marriage had likewise been loveless. But we must beware laying too many shortcomings to heredity. Perhaps the very absence of love from that childhood home should have yielded a keener appreciation of love in his later home, if his own heart had not been so hard. Our difficulty here is easily made. How far Ibsen fell into it we do not know. Brand's lovelessness sprang not from any passing over in heredity from his mother, for character is never trans-

mitted. His lovelessness sprang from weaknesses of character that were like his mother's. Hers was a material selfishness; his was a spiritual selfishness. The lovelessness in each case sprang from egotism. But we must remember that it could not be inherited. Brand's lovelessness was *all his own.*

We shall see the truth of this when we look back at the beginning of Brand's life and remember that his religion began in a scorn of the weaknesses and follies of men, which he applied also to the men themselves. It was Agnes, his good angel, who persuaded him that his native village was as worthy a place as any for his work. Brand scorned men as well as men's sins, and no true religion or service can be built upon the scorn of men. That was the fatal plan in life which landed him at last in the hopeless isolation of the ice-church. Agnes was his last bond of connection with the world of men. Brand could have developed his best self through the side of mercy and of love alone. His ideal failed because it was so far from the haunts of man's

common needs. The multitudes' hunger was the realization of Jesus, and he refused to send them away until physical wants had been supplied. His word was strong because it was so humble as to be in keeping with human toils, the lowly tasks of fishing, the ungarnished room of the peasant, the coarse food of the hut. These might be the surroundings for a Lord's Supper of holiest communion. A yielding of Brand to love would have opened new springs of power in his life and would have made possible the realization among men of the ideal that lured him on. It was a grievous wrong he did to Agnes's love in forbidding her the memory of her little boy. It was a far deeper injury he did to his own soul.

One so deficient on this side of character would be religiously impractical and could only lead up barren heights where it was impossible for common men to follow. "His categorical imperative . . . 'all or nothing,' does not bear the strain of experience. Life is simpler, is not to be lived at such an intolerable tension."[1]

[1] Huneker, Egoists, p. 334.

Ibsen himself spoke of Brand as having climbed "toward the peaks, toward the stars, and toward the great silence,"[1] and this is poetically true enough. But the One who lived to call himself Son of man has shown us that the heights which lead us away from lowly human sympathies are heights only in vain imagination. The religious luster that gathers about Brand's head is largely fictitious. We admire his sacrifice because it was great, but it must eternally fail because at heart it was suffered for an individualistic aim. We must learn to shun even goodness that starves our human sympathies. The way to the heights is still through the depths of a lively human sympathy. Brand was too selfish and too wanting in humility to reach them, and this in spite of all his sacrifice. "Though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing." Olson has discriminatingly said that Brand's Christ was only the martyr, and that he never rose to the better thought of Christ as Redeemer.[2]

[1] Quoted in Ibsen on His Merits, Sir E. R. Russell, p. 106.
[2] Olson, Ibsen's Brand.

We can best apply here the thought of Tolstoy as the final test of Brand's character: "Where love is, God is"; and by the same token where love is not, God is not.

CONCLUSION

CHAPTER XVIII

THE PROBLEM IN MODERN THOUGHT

The Modern Pessimists

While in the foregoing studies we have been discovering the various phases of the problem of evil and suffering as they have risen to prominence in the literature of the ages, we have also been disclosing the sources of modern doubt. From Rousseau, through Schopenhauer, down to the pessimistic writers of our own time, we have had a sort of apostolic succession of despair that has exerted great influence upon existing culture.

Of this school Grierson says:[1] "We had in the pre-Raphaelite movement the art romance of modern melancholy; we have the poetic sentiment of it in the dramas of M. Maeterlinck; we have in Wagner's Lohengrin and Tannhäuser the musical

[1] Grierson, Modern Mysticism, pp. 39-44.

emotion of it. . . . It is beauty and longing in Rossetti, beauty and despair in Maeterlinck, beauty and madness in Wagner. . . . It comprises a vast social world from the cynical despair of Montmartre to the sentimental despair of the Madeleine. The first is a frank confession of a glaring social fact; the second, a religious and secret confession of the same troubled state of the soul. This art is not a Latin and Parisian development; all nations understand it, for the language and gesture of modern Melancholy are universal." . . . "The pessimism of our day has neither tears nor moments of mystical joy. It is scientific and æsthetic, and the consolation, if any, lies in resignation. The pessimists of the present day are of two kinds: those who feel keenly, but are incapable of deep thought, and those who cannot help meditating, analyzing, and classifying."[1]

Readjustment of Ideas

This concerns only the great leaders of pessimistic thought. There is a great fol-

[1] Grierson, Celtic Temperament, pp. 69-70.

lowing among the common people, and especially among those who for one reason or another have been alienated from the church. The works of pessimism are the most thumbed and frayed of any in our public libraries. Schopenhauer's chapter in defense of suicide, to judge by worn pages, is more perused than that of any other volume one can find. The causes for such feeling among the common people are not to be found in the shortcomings of philosophy, but, rather, in the forces of modern civilization. The uncertainty caused by the break-up of traditional views regarding God, religion, the Bible, and the authority of the church has offered the desired excuse to men whose hearts were already weaned from religion and to others who had not the mind nor the diligence to seek the truth. However we may deplore it, the church is not speaking with the old appeal to authority, and where it is so speaking it is not speaking with any abiding effectiveness. The age demands a gospel which shall carry in itself the evidences of its divine authority, without the "Thus it is

said" that has ever been characteristic of the teaching of scribes and Pharisees. Because too large a portion of the teachers of the church are still quoting infallible authorities rather than relying on the eternal elements of verification in the consciences of men, she has in many instances lost her distinctive place of leadership and failed in her task. Among the masses there is overfullness of material comforts; there are disillusioned religious hopes; there are doubts induced by the dissolution of old systems of thought, of old understandings of the natural world, by the unsatisfactory nature of spiritual proof which makes it compelling only for the spiritually minded. Too often has the church depended upon the fear of an artificial retribution, and too often has she made her appeal for salvation to the sordid and the selfish interests of human nature. Men need to be made to see that retribution for sin is a reality more terrible than they have dreamed. They need to see that the effect of sin upon the soul, upon the highest uses and possibilities of personality, is more terrible than any

pictured flames of brimstone. They need to realize that, so far as human insight can go, the damage is irreparable apart from a Divine and Inscrutable Mercy. But the chief emphasis should never be put upon this negative aspect. The man who is scared into the Kingdom from selfish motives of salvation has but a feeble and wavering start toward that spirit which was in Christ. The appeal should be ever positive. The case should be fairly stated. There should be such an emphasis given that the terrible and destructive nature of sin should be made to fill the minds of men with unaccustomed awe. But the motive for salvation should, in this age, be put upon the highest possible plane. Loyalty to a divine world order—loyalty to one's race, to one's nation, to one's friends, loyalty to the God of righteousness, which means, in the last analysis of all, loyalty to one's highest self—should be the keynote of appeal. The thought should be less of escape from that which is undesirable in the future, and more of one's escape from that which in the present hour mars and destroys life

and, so far as human insight can reach, must be eternally marring and destructive.

Is this only a new phraseology for a very old truth taught from the beginning? Let us not neglect nor despise it for that reason. Why should we seek to keep our evangel ever in the same words? Why not speak it in words that men can understand? If the present interest is predominantly scientific, then it is the duty of this age to use every discovery of science to drive home her truth to scientific minds.

The great spiritual verities, whatever the form of speech, stand out as an inalienable portion of the human soul. As such they can never be permanently lost, nor kept from coming at last into their kingdom. The form of man's thinking changes and is bound to change with every added insight from nature and life. The great moral verities are as indestructible as man's soul. There is no more need to fear the compulsory readjustments of modern thought than to fear that the sun would refuse to rise because men have changed from the Ptolemaic to the Copernican astronomy.

It is the same set of facts that is being interpreted in either case. The facts are more important for life than interpretation, and the facts remain.

With such a grasp of essential truth the church can stand forth boldly in any age. She must recognize the necessity for constant readjustment of the setting of truth. Yet she knows that religious truth cannot be permanently hindered by any discovery that can be made. She should stand with attitude of honesty and openness toward all truth. To slavishly defend any theory against overwhelming light is to cherish tradition more than truth. In this respect the state of the Christian Church to-day is far more hopeful than it has been since the early days of the Reformation.

Misconception About Happiness

Modern pessimism is also much concerned over the unsatisfactory nature of human happiness. The increase of material comforts, the advance of medical science in the alleviation of pain, the increasingly successful struggle for material things, have

led to an overemphasis of the importance of physical happiness. A recent writer[1] has pointed out that if happiness were the supreme goal, the pursuit of happiness would be the highest good; but happiness can never be the highest consideration in a moral and spiritual world. The fertile source of this despair has been in the failure to realize the relative nature of happiness. Any inventory of the sum of happiness must include the moral and spiritual, as well as the mental and physical natures. The one-sidedness of this despair is clearly shown by the character of the people most influenced by it. They are for the most part people who have every physical means to happiness. Their misery springs out of the inability of an overplus of good things to prove permanently satisfying. It is just this oversight of the necessity for the moral and spiritual elements in any true happiness that is the seat of their difficulty.

The modern man is no longer satisfied with the mere transfer of the problem to another world. The thought of a sort of

[1] Ward, Realm of Ends, Gifford Lectures, 1911; pp. 339-340.

physical happiness in the life to come as a recompense for that which is missed here does not appeal to him. He has now too much of a sense of the unsatisfying nature of physical fullness to dream that such can be the reward of his soul. If heaven is to be a place of eternal wassail, in which is heard "the shout of them that feast," the man whose motive is the "main chance" is likely to prefer the short and satisfying wassail of this life to the eternal but uncertain one of the life to come. It is not strange that he recognizes his kinship with the self-seeking so-called religious brother who denies himself strictly now with a lively anticipation of physical delights to come. It seems strange that the unspiritual nature of all such conceptions should not be apparent to the most benighted. We must find our sum of happiness, not in the absence of physical pain, nor in the lack of tragedy in life, not in continual success and the smile of material fortune, but in the deeper joys of the soul which can rise triumphant over every hour of pain and find songs in every night of

loss. Such a soul has already begun to realize a blessedness which is eternal because it is already a part of the personality and cannot be destroyed by any earthly shock. The world did not give and cannot take it away.

Our unhappiness more often springs from some lack in the higher realm of the spirit than from any failure of physical comfort. It springs often from the very loftiness of our aims, and because the spirit will not be satisfied with unspiritual things. The animal knows little of suffering or pain because its pain is confined to the physical realm. The man suffers by reason of his higher spiritual consciousness. Out of this grasp of the soul after higher self-realization springs our unhappiness and also our peace. In the words of Doctor Royce, "Were there no longing in Time, there would be no peace in Eternity."[1]

The Presence of Moral and Physical Disorder

The sense of the presence of moral and physical disorder in the world has in our

[1] The World and the Individual, 2d Series, p. 386.

time become almost a new sense with its new altruistic and social application. Hence the despair arising from this source is most keenly felt in modern life. The disorders of society, which seem by reason of their complicated nature beyond the power of man to correct, give rise to a very deep despair. Why aspiring men should set upon tasks of human amelioration, giving life and happiness for the social salvage of individuals who do not seem strongly to desire salvation, is one of the perplexing questions of many a life. Many a man has faced his moral and social responsibility in the bitter mood of Hamlet—

> The time is out of joint: O cursèd spite,
> That ever I was born to set it right!

The amelioration of pain has heightened our sense of the evil of that which remains uncorrected. The commonness of luxury and affluence has written in deeper lines the contrast of those who are inexorably barred from hope. Ignorance, poverty, and want, from which escape is made impossible by the exactions of organized society, forbid spirit-

ual repose. The suffering of innocent children for the sins of the fathers creates a new horror for the mind.

These dark thoughts are only deepened by the occurrence of catastrophes that sweep away guilt and innocence, culture and ignorance, redeemers and debasers of men in a common ruin. To these are added the personal flings of fortune which seem with malevolent perseverance to keep us back from our highest hopes and our best service.

For all such it will be seen that the individual is attempting to interpret the problem of his life without the key of complete experience.[1] The judgment on God's goodness and on the Divine Providence of the present order should certainly rest on something broader than the partial experience of pleasure or pain that is given in the present hour.[2] It is as if the child should judge of

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[1] Bowne, The Essence of Religion, p. 67.

[2] "The actual existence of moral evil in our world is only incompatible with a theocracy, if God is the author of this evil; if, in other words, God is the sole free agent and his so-called creatures only so many impotent vessels of honor or dishonor. Then, indeed, God and the world would be

the love of his parents by their refusal or acquiescence in his requests. When we see life in retrospect it becomes apparent that for us the refusals of life have often been the greatest blessings. This much we can discover when we see them in the larger relations which years and experience bring. And as for one's overwhelming and thankless tasks, one finds in the acceptance of their challenge the summoning and cultivation of one's highest powers. In life's afterthought they appear bearing the most precious and most inalienable gifts. "In the conquest over suffering all the nobler gifts of the spirit, all the richer experiences of life, consist."[1]

Men of another age, coming thus far, might have been able to sit down satisfied, but it is certain we of this age cannot. We

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bad together, but God only would be morally evil. And that, surely, is a supposition as absurd as it is monstrous. Before the presence of evil in the world can be cited as evidence that God is not present in it, it must be shown that the evil is such as not merely to retard but absolutely to prevent the onward progress of moral order and render the attainment of the upper limit of moral evolution forever impossible" (Ward, Realm of Ends, p. 375).

[1] Royce, The World and the Individual, 2d Series, p. 409.

cannot say, "Because I have been able from suffering to seize a higher good, let me be satisfied that other individuals around me have the same privilege." We cannot escape our sense of responsibility for the unalleviated suffering of others. There is no joy in others' pain, though that pain be in them the way to spiritual values. We cannot forget the gusty night when One who was going bravely to crucifixion used every means to save His disciples from a like fate. And though like Him who received His final discipline through the experience of the cross, we win our way hardly into life, we are not blind to the moral blackness of those who furnished the cross and set its cruel beams up in His life. In other words, we can through faith reach a personal solution while as yet the larger question remains unsolved.

Lack of Adequate Motive

The sense of aimlessness which formed a fundamental of Schopenhauer's philosophy has characterized the thought and life of many of his pessimistic disciples. It was

inevitable in any scheme which found the fountain-head of Being in no higher source than that of non-personal and aimless Will. Many lives are lost in the divine order, and give way to hopelessness because their life-plan and motive are too small to satisfy an eternal spirit. Despair is inevitable to the life which lives only for the passing day, or which has not caught its bearing in the higher relations. That night in the upper room, surrounded by the conscious breakdown of many dreams, in personal danger from relentless enemies, the scattering of the discipleship imminent, his own betrayal in process of accomplishment, called to the petty task of rebuking selfish disciples by acting the role of the humblest servant, Jesus would have fallen into deepest despair had it not been for the consciousness that he came from God and went to God. The thought of source and end, of beginning and goal, made every task and every humiliation a joy. Because he saw his life in its larger relations, every temptation to sadness was removed. A great measure of the world's despair comes

from an inability to realize the meaning of common tasks, labors, and disappointments. It arises from absence of adequate motive in life. The passing hour in which Faust sought his satisfaction had nothing whatever to give him of joy, until he hit upon its discovery in a higher relation. Our lives, so long as they dwell upon a momentary pleasure or pain, success or victory, will remain in constant peril of the violence of circumstance. It is not until the larger relations of life begin to appear that the passing moment sinks into the wider plane of experience.

"We judge the goods of life by standards of sensuous comfort and worldly success, and God has a very different standard. We desire to be happy; God wishes us to be holy. We look at the outward appearance; God looketh at the heart. We look at the seen and temporal; God looketh at the unseen and eternal. We seek to make God the servant of our worldly ease and comfort, while he is seeking to make us his children, meet to dwell with him in light. A great many of our difficulties disappear

when we occupy the divine standpoint and view things under the form of the eternal. God is not much concerned to make us any of the things which the natural man desires to be—rich, prosperous, successful, as men count success. These are accidents that count for little in the eternal years. Hence the apparent indifference, and even cruelty, of the divine dealings with us. We set our heart on things one may not safely have. We desire things which are of no essential moment or abiding significance. We seek to rest in an earthly paradise, while God is preparing us for a heavenly. Thus God's plans and ours are often at variance because we are not yet able to appreciate that he is preparing some better thing for us. But we gradually grow toward the insight."[1]

The Breakdown of Religious Ideals

A consideration of the elements of despair would be incomplete without an account of that deadlock which occurs with the breakdown of spiritual ideals. Usually,

[1] Bowne, The Essence of Religion, pp. 60-61.

these ideals are a one-sided view of some portion of the gospel which in the heyday of discovery and appropriation seems to be a full, perfect, and complete answer to the deepest problem of life, and which is shown to be inadequate only by the shock of individual experience. This truth is illustrated in Brand with his ideal of a perfect surrender to the will of God. The ideal of perfect surrender was not wrong. The weakness lay in its application. There are many things which God will not demand. He will never require that which outrages personality. The foremost article in the creed of Christ was respect for the individual. He never needlessly wounded or transgressed it. "I stand at the door, and knock: . . . if any man open the door, I will come in." Brand used his own renunciation as a club to beat other lives into subjection. In his very scorn for the weaknesses of the unspiritual lay the source of failure. One may be as severe as he pleases with his own life. He needs to grant to others an equal liberty. This Brand could not do, so he was filled with a continual dissatisfaction.

He was dissatisfied with self, because his continual introspection kept disclosing new fields unconquered by the principle, "All or nothing." So he was driven to make sacrifices which God never demanded. His theory consistently and universally applied would scorn every good gift of God and make life impossible, ending in a loveless, lonely *impasse*. Because the human element was wanting from his religious zeal, he ends far off in the ice-church, utterly bereft of any following save the mad girl, Gerd, while from his heart has been torn that human love which alone could make him perfect.

This conflict between the world and the spirit is a very real one to the keenly conscientious soul. It recurs wherever there is literal interpretation of divine commands without the guiding light of reason. To very many the human reason is too prone to sin and to speak after the manner of selfishness. This forms the torment of sensitive minds. And very often this peculiar sensitiveness undoes itself. A life given over to minute introspection of unessen-

tials is very liable to miss the great moralities. That case is not unusual in which a person is torn by self-examination for any lingering "roots of bitterness" who without compunction conveys slander against an enemy. One such was known who was ever in this state of tortured conscientiousness about the "roots of bitterness," who ingenuously told of commanding the small son to sink in his seat upon the train, that he might appear to the conductor under age. The climax came with the recital of how both mother and son escaped altogether the vigilance of the conductor and rode free. Perhaps the smallness of soul aided the escape. It is not amazing that when such pursuit of religious ideals is watched from the outside it leads to utter repudiation of religion by men of the world. And eventually the life of those who thus pursue it drops into a hollow mockery of religious reality, intent alone upon tithing its mint, anise, and cummin.

For the sincere soul it is a distressing fact that no truly religious ideal is ever perfectly achieved. It may be and often

is, in theory, in those minds which are given over to a lively imagination of virtues not actually possessed, and to those who are blinded by an assertive egotism to grave defects in personal thought and action. The moment one cries out to the passing emotion, to any subjective state of the soul, or to any condition of living, "Stay, thou art so fair," he is in the condition of Faust. That moment he passes into the power of the devil.

It is the condition of a healthy soul to be ever continuing the fight for perfection. Even Christ is represented as becoming perfect through life's deep experience. "Within the province of the inner life *an earnest effort is itself a fact*,"[1] and in the intensity and perfection of our struggle, the completeness of our gift of ourselves to the search, not in the perfection of our attainment, must lie our peace and our reward. Stevenson's words are ever true, that "to travel hopefully is better than to arrive." Arrivals are the greatest disasters to the human soul. They mean that the soul is

[1] Eucken, The Truth of Religion, p. 409.

satisfied at last with less than the eternal. That means that, for all practical purposes, the soul is lost.

One thing life should teach us, and that is to beware of havens. Many come into what they consider an unending haven of spiritual rest who are simply grounded upon shallows. The sons of God are content to sail God's unresting sea. It is peace enough and haven enough if they have on board the Heavenly Pilot.

Résumé of the Problem

Modern thought is demanding a deeper-going and more thorough solution of the problem than has so far perhaps been philosophically attempted. It is not a sufficient sop to the clear-sighted to declare with Monism that evil is necessary as a foil or contrast to the good, nor that it is nonexistent—a form of mental error. Such a claim is too much contradicted by human experience. Nor is the modern mind able to rest in the assumption that God is himself responsible for evil.

The ancient dualistic view is equally

repugnant. We are no longer willing to assign an eternity to evil in which it opposes itself to the good will of God. The view of a divided universe has become impossible to us. But the deeper problem is with us in intense form. The discoveries of science daily disclose new unities in the universe. Our own ideals call for the final and complete triumph of the good, and the banishment of evil. It is our ideal in society, and we feel that God can have no lesser end. How, then, are we to meet the dark question of the existence of evil in a world in which God is supreme? Philosophy's best word leaves the heart unsatisfied. As yet philosophy has not brought the satisfying answer. Its highest and best work has been to show that the problem is ameliorated in experience by the triumph of the timeless human spirit over passing wrongs and sorrows, by showing the relative nature of evil, and how from its opposition arise the limitless aspirations of man. A final answer it has not given.

Does not this deadlock point us to the only solution that is possible to finite minds,

namely, the personal and the individual? Will it ever be possible to strike the balance of logical contradictions and be at peace? There is no promise of such an attainment. Nevertheless, each one of us can answer the question in actual living. We can rise superior to every sorrow; we can gain strength of character from every temptation; we can win discipline from every pain. We can in personal living transmute every evil into a larger good. The goal, whatever it be, must lie in this direction.

CHAPTER XIX

JESUS OF NAZARETH AND THE PERSONAL SOLUTION

The Individual Must Be Considered in Relations

The popular thought concerning sin and salvation has been in one way too individualistic and in another not sufficiently so. We have thought of a man's sin as something for which society was mainly at fault, and of salvation as something that could be achieved by him alone. We have thought of the sufferings of the individual as if he were an isolated atom of the universe. This is natural, because suffering is in the end that of an individual.

Our crosses are hewn from different trees,
But we all must have our Calvaries;
We may climb the height from a different side,
But we each go up to be crucified;
As we scale the steep another may share
The dreadful load that our shoulders bear;

> But the costliest sorrow is all our own,
> For on the summit we bleed alone.[1]

But he whose suffering is not lifted into the larger relationships has not learned life's lesson. His suffering has been in vain. So there is no solution of the problem of evil which considers the individual apart from his relations in society. We are beginning to see in an increasingly social age a truth that has been long in dawning, that the individual cannot be saved without being himself also measurably a savior of those about him. Any indifference toward his world of relations bars the individual from that salvation which he selfishly seeks, for, in our common life, there are many who go down by very reason of the temptation caused by social wrongs that are sanctioned and profited in by the more fortunate. There is coming over the minds of men a new source of despair. It is the despair that springs from a consciousness of profiting by another's sufferings and sins. Men begin to feel keenly their responsibility for a damnation of society toward which

[1] Frederic Lawrence Knowles, Love Triumphant, p. 45.

they have not yet learned their practical duty. The cry of helpless children, of unhappy women, of men made brutish by the exactions of poverty and toil, make all talk of peace of soul seem like the foolish babblings of idiotic joy at a funeral.

For men who are doing nothing to relieve society of its burden of sin, wrong, and injustice to talk about blessedness strikes the modern world as hollow mockery. The truth is, we cannot enjoy blessedness as a passive experience. We are blessed only as our lives are bringing blessedness to others. This truth was illustrated in the life of our Master. He refused to think of his life apart from its relations. It had a source; it came from God; it had certain specific duties toward the souls amid which it moved, and there were certain definite purposes to be realized in the future. He dared enjoy no blessedness that was held in reserve for self. There was ever the necessity of bringing his world to the knowledge and experience of God and of lifting his life into its larger relations. Pains and buffetings, the loneliness of scorn, the heart-

break of being despised and rejected by those whom he loved unto death, toils, privations, suborned witnesses, physical pain, the degradation of the cross became supreme sources of joy as he lifted his life into its larger relations. Nor is this truth an academic one. How unfortunate is that life which is so lost in the maze that it has nothing left to live for! What sorrows have been borne with brave spirit, "for the sake of the children"! How does the degradation of failure, loss, or ridicule rise into dignity as it is bravely borne for others, for a Cause yet to be born, for a Will that is perfect, or an End that is sure! Wherever the philosophical solution of the problem of evil may lead us, it is certain that the practical solution is here.

The Identification of God with Cosmic Life

Jesus found the solution of the problem in the identification of God with the life of the world. If the claim of Jesus to Messiahship means anything, it means that we are to think of God as identifying him-

self with the life of the universe. Thus the groaning and travailing of the whole creation in pain has a divine interest and significance. Jesus's teaching about the fall of a sparrow being of moment to the Eternal was no mere poetic fancy. It was indicative of Jesus's whole thought of the relation of God to the world. Men who have learned only the fellowship of joy have scarcely scratched the surface-meaning of companionship. The fellowship in pain and peril is the fellowship that binds souls into one. That fellowship with his creation God desires. That is exactly what Jesus intends to tell us about God. God is a companion of our suffering, and lest our human understanding should fail to grasp so extravagant a truth, Jesus identifies himself with God. He tells the amazed disciples that he and the Father are one. Then he holds himself not aloof, but is wearied with the weariness of their journeyings, is hungered in the famine of their misfortune, weeps with them at graves, suffers in the sickness of their little children, concerns himself in their catch of fish, and,

finally, makes the astounding claim, "I who am thus a part of your common life, I am God."

What wonder these men stood in open-faced surprise attempting to drink in his meaning! It was like that silent hour of glory in the morning when you stand in the embrace of a great mountain. You see the limpid mountain lakes like gems set in a crown. You see the woods as if new-washed and fresh-tinted by an Eternal Hand set forth as if they were your individual treasure. Far off you hear the silver bugles of the mountain cataracts calling to your soul. High up soars a hoary summit that seems all but unattainable. Your soul cries out: "All this for me! How can I see it and live?" Thus must the vastness of this truth have come home to the disciples, as they gathered up from it all they could comprehend, even as you pitch your little tent and build your camp fire, making provision for the common wants in the conscious embrace of the old mountain.

It is little wonder that Jesus's message was received with scorn and ridicule. It

is not surprising that he was slain for blasphemy. It is no wonder that there still linger men who deny his Deity. It is such a stupendous thought. I have no doubt that there are many more who would deny, but that custom, creed, familiarity with the statement of truth have hid from them the overwhelming nature of Jesus's claim for himself and for God. When we say that Jesus is a High Priest, touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and then that Jesus was God, we mean that God suffers in our sufferings, is agonized in our agonies, enfolds our little lives with a love more sympathetic and tender than that of our own mothers.

In the words of a modern philosopher, "In the absolute oneness of God with the sufferer, in the concept of the suffering and therefore triumphant God, lies the logical solution of the problem of evil."[1]

I am well aware that this leaves some natural problems unsolved. What becomes measurably clear to us regarding lives that perish by sickness and age is not so clear

[1] Royce, Studies in Good and Evil, p. 14.

when we think of great natural disasters. Here our horror arises mostly from the fact of the wholesale character of the disaster. An individual case stirs our pity and sympathy for but a moment. We say, "What are a few days of life more or less, in the eternal years?" We think of disasters worse than death, and of the individual life as only suffering from ills incident upon a system which an All-Wisdom knows to be the ultimate best for character and life. A great calamity intensifies our questioning many fold. To us the fisherman, drifted out with his dory in the fog, gives his life as the expected toll of the sea. A thousand Titanic victims go down together, and we question the divine goodness. Such questionings, inevitable as they may seem, find no adequate answer in time, though their case is in reality no deeper than the suffering of a single individual. Jesus does not present any theoretical solution at all. He offers us only the practical one. He asks first for a suspension of judgment. Of life's solutions he says, "Ye cannot bear them now." On the other

hand, he asserts that they are not, as many have thought, all evidences of divine wrath upon sin. "Those upon whom the tower of Siloam fell and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?" He asks us to trust God and to rest sure in the Eternal Goodness behind the universe.

The Identification of God with Human Achievement

Not only does Jesus represent God as interested in the natural phenomena affecting life. He represents him as identified with human achievement. What deeper meaning of the incarnation can be discovered? Jesus identifies God as living and working in him. The works that he is able to do are less of himself than of the Father. It is the Father that works through him. If they cannot believe him by reason of his personality, let them look back of him to his works, as the evidence of God. They surely ought not to continue blinded by partisanship in the presence of the works of God. Every good and per-

fect work comes from God, is infilled with God, is directed of God, is a part of the perfection of his universe through human achievement. Jesus's message was that God desires to work through men with the same freedom that now he works through nature. To man are given will and individuality, that he may become a partner with God in the final result. Here lies the efficient reason for the possibility of evil. It is only through moral choice and the conquest of evil that we can become partakers with God in a moral universe. We become thereby not mere creatures but creators as well. "The real world must be the joint result of God and man . . . unless we are to deny the reality of that in us which leads us to God at all."[1] It is indeed the divine purpose that we realize the apostolic injunction to become coworkers with that God who worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure. "In the order of time you embody in outer acts what is for him the truth of his eternity."[2]

[1] Ward, Realm of Ends, p. 352.

[2] Royce, Studies in Good and Evil, p. 28.

The uniqueness of Jesus's life sprang from his unique consciousness of relationship to God and to the world. He solved his personal problem as we have never solved it, and he looked clearly into the very heart of life because his own life was lifted to the infinite and eternal standpoint. When the clouds that have obscured the realm of modern thought have rolled away, and the chatterings of a superficial learning are heard no more, the intellectual world will awaken to the deep cosmic and social implications of the incarnation, the depths of religious truth will be uncovered, and Jesus will come into his own.

Lifting the Individual Up to the Universal Plane

Just as Jesus solved the problem of evil by lifting his life into its cosmic relations, so he intended we should find our practical solution. An uncompleted world,[1] attended by a spirit of unrest because of the unfulfilled yearnings of a "creature moving

[1] Eucken, Truth of Religion, p. 51ff.

about in worlds unrealized," speaks in unmistakable tones for those who have ears to hear that the solution is not theoretical but actual, not universal but personal. The personal solution must come first. Just as the problem is now unsolved because it is a living one, and in the individual life calls for constant struggle, so for the race it can never be solved until mankind universally has emerged from the morally evil into the morally good. Then we can answer our question abstractly. Till then our only solution can be a personal one. The Captain of our salvation leads the way and it is his purpose "to bring many sons to glory." With our lives centered about selfish joys and selfish successes, interested only from the standpoint of selfish ambitions—the fames, pomps, and pleasures of the world—there can be no solution whatever. Our personal misfortune or seeming misfortune, viewed from that standpoint, will cause us to cry out bitterly against God and the universal order. We shall be tempted to join that sickening wail of infants over lost bonbons that has

characterized the æsthetic, immoral, and weakening pessimism of our day.

When the evils of our present life are turned one by one into a new sympathy for men, into a larger striving after the perfect day, the mists that have darkened vision fall from us. When our lives fall into step with a Divine Will that worketh hitherto and still works in us; when our lives are looked upon from the eternal standpoint, all shadows fall behind us, because our faces are turned toward the Light and the Ultimate Revelation.

We can face the worst that life can bring with the triumphant joy with which Jesus went to his cross. Even our sanctification will not be sought for selfish ends nor to achieve a passive goodness. It will be for a larger serviceableness. "*For their sakes* I sanctify myself" is the word of Jesus.

Jesus ever tried to lift the disciples up into this higher order of living in which all mysteries should be solved at last. His practical word of faith to them was this: "In the world ye *shall* have tribulation:

but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

To face disaster with triumphant soul for the sake of the world around you, to sink your lesser ills in the universal need, to live heroically and to die with one's face to the light—this is the only solution granted to mortals, and it is enough until, speaking in the words of a teacher whom many loved, "we pass beyond the night and know as we are known."[1]

[1] Bowne, Essence of Religion, p. 69.

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